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SWINBURNE'S COLLECTED POETICAL WORKS

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SWINBURNE'S COLLECTED POETICAL WORKS

VOLUME I

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Riverside, California

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TO

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

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DEDICATORY EPISTLE

To my best and dearest friend I dedicate the first collected edition of my poems, and to him I address what I have to say on the occasion.

You will agree with me that it is impossible for any man to undertake the task of commentary, however brief and succinct, on anything he has done or tried to do, without incurring the charge of egoism. But there are two kinds of egoism, the furtive and the frank : and the outspoken and open-hearted candour of Milton and Wordsworth, Corneille and Hugo, is not the least or the lightest of their claims to the regard as well as the respect or the reverence of their readers. Even if I were worthy to claim kinship with the lowest or with the highest of these deathless names, I would not seek to shelter myself under the shadow of its authority. The question would still remain open on all sides. Whether it is worth while for any man to offer any remarks or for any other man to read his remarks on his own work, his own ambition, or his own attempts, he cannot of course determine. If there are great

examples of abstinence from such a doubtful enterprise, there are likewise great examples to the contrary. As long as the writer can succeed in evading the kindred charges and the cognate risks of vanity and humility, there can be no reason why he should not undertake it. And when he has nothing to regret and nothing to recant, when he finds nothing that he could wish to cancel, to alter, or to unsay, in any page he has ever laid before his reader, he need not be seriously troubled by the inevitable consciousness that the work of his early youth is not and cannot be unnaturally unlike the work of a very young man. This would be no excuse for it, if it were in any sense bad work : if it be so, no apology would avail ; and I certainly have none to offer.

It is now thirty-six years since my first volume of miscellaneous verse, lyrical and dramatic and elegiac and generally heterogeneous, had as quaint a reception and as singular a fortune as I have ever heard or read of. I do not think you will differ from my opinion that what is best in it cannot be divided from what is not so good by any other line of division than that which marks off mature from immature execution—in other words, complete from incomplete conception. For its author the most amusing and satisfying result of the clatter aroused by it was the deep diversion of collating and comparing the variously inaccurate verdicts of the scornful or mournful censors who insisted on regarding all the studies of passion or sensation attempted or achieved

in it as either confessions of positive fact or excursions of absolute fancy. There are photographs from life in the book; and there are sketches from imagination. Some which keen-sighted criticism has dismissed with a smile as ideal or imaginary were as real and actual as they well could be: others which have been taken for obvious transcripts from memory were utterly fantastic or dramatic. If the two kinds cannot be distinguished, it is surely rather a credit than a discredit to an artist whose medium or material has more in common with a musician's than with a sculptor's. Friendly and kindly critics, English and foreign, have detected ignorance of the subject in poems taken straight from the life, and have protested that they could not believe me were I to swear that poems entirely or mainly fanciful were not faithful expressions or transcriptions of the writer's actual experience and personal emotion. But I need not remind you that all I have to say about this book was said once for all in the year of its publication: I have nothing to add to my notes then taken, and I have nothing to retract from them. To parade or to disclaim experience of passion or of sorrow, of pleasure or of pain, is the habit and the sign of a school which has never found a disciple among the better sort of English poets, and which I know to be no less pitifully contemptible in your opinion than in mine.

In my next work it should be superfluous to say that there is no touch of dramatic impersonation or

imaginary emotion. The writer of 'Songs before Sunrise,' from the first line to the last, wrote simply in submissive obedience to Sir Philip Sidney's precept —'Look in thine heart, and write.' The dedication of these poems, and the fact that the dedication was accepted, must be sufficient evidence of this. They do not pretend and they were never intended to be merely the metrical echoes, or translations into lyric verse, of another man's doctrine. Mazzini was no more a Pope or a Dictator than I was a parasite or a papist. Dictation and inspiration are rather different things. These poems, and others which followed or preceded them in print, were inspired by such faith as is born of devotion and reverence: not by such faith, if faith it may be called, as is synonymous with servility or compatible with prostration of an abject or wavering spirit and a submissive or dethroned intelligence. You know that I never pretended to see eye to eye with my illustrious friends and masters, Victor Hugo and Giuseppe Mazzini, in regard to the positive and passionate confidence of their sublime and purified theology. Our betters ought to know better than we: they would be the last to wish that we should pretend to their knowledge, or assume a certitude which is theirs and is not ours. But on one point we surely cannot but be at one with them: that the spirit and the letter of all other than savage and barbarous religions are irreconcilably at variance, and that prayer or homage addressed to an image of our own or of other men's making, be that image

avowedly material or conventionally spiritual, is the affirmation of idolatry with all its attendant atrocities, and the negation of all belief, all reverence, and all love, due to the noblest object of human worship that humanity can realise or conceive. Thus much the exercise of our common reason might naturally suffice to show us: but when its evidence is confirmed and fortified by the irrefragable and invariable evidence of history, there is no room for further dispute or fuller argument on a subject now visibly beyond reach and eternally beyond need of debate or demonstration. I know not whether it may or may not be worth while to add that every passing word I have since thought fit to utter on any national or political question has been as wholly consistent with the principles which I then did my best to proclaim and defend as any apostasy from the faith of all republicans in the fundamental and final principle of union, voluntary if possible and compulsory if not, would have been ludicrous in the impudence of its inconsistency with those simple and irreversible principles. Monarchists and anarchists may be advocates of national dissolution and reactionary division: republicans cannot be. The first and last article of their creed is unity: the most grinding and crushing tyranny of a convention, a directory, or a despot, is less incompatible with republican faith than the fissiparous democracy of disunionists or communalists.

If the fortunes of my lyrical work were amusingly eccentric and accidental, the varieties of opinion

which have saluted the appearance of my plays have been, or have seemed to my humility, even more diverting and curious. I have been told by reviewers of note and position that a single one of them is worth all my lyric and otherwise undramatic achievements or attempts: and I have been told on equal or similar authority that, whatever I may be in any other field, as a dramatist I am demonstrably nothing. My first if not my strongest ambition was to do something worth doing, and not utterly unworthy of a young countryman of Marlowe the teacher and Webster the pupil of Shakespeare, in the line of work which those three poets had left as a possibly unattainable example for ambitious Englishmen. And my first book, written while yet under academic or tutorial authority, bore evidence of that ambition in every line. I should be the last to deny that it also bore evidence of the fact that its writer had no more notion of dramatic or theatrical construction than the authors of 'Tamburlaine the Great,' 'King Henry VI.,' and 'Sir Thomas Wyatt.' Not much more, you may possibly say, was discernible in 'Chastelard': a play also conceived and partly written by a youngster not yet emancipated from servitude to college rule. I fear that in the former volume there had been little if any promise of power to grapple with the realities and subtleties of character and of motive: that whatever may be in it of promise or of merit must be sought in the language and the style of such better passages as

may perhaps be found in single and separable speeches of Catherine and of Rosamond. But in 'Chastelard' there are two figures and a sketch in which I certainly seem to see something of real and evident life. The sketch of Darnley was afterwards filled out and finished in the subsequent tragedy of 'Bothwell.' That ambitious, conscientious, and comprehensive piece of work is of course less properly definable as a tragedy than by the old Shakespearean term of a chronicle history. The radical difference between tragic history and tragedy of either the classic or the romantic order, and consequently between the laws which govern the one and the principles which guide the other, you have yourself made clear and familiar to all capable students. This play of mine was not, I think, inaccurately defined as an epic drama in the French verses of dedication which were acknowledged by the greatest of all French poets in a letter from which I dare only quote one line of Olympian judgment and godlike generosity. 'Occuper ces deux cimes, cela n'est donné qu'à vous.' Nor will I refrain from the confession that I cannot think it an epic or a play in which any one part is sacrificed to any other, any subordinate figure mishandled or neglected or distorted or effaced for the sake of the predominant and central person. And, though this has nothing or less than nothing to do with any question of poetic merit or demerit, of dramatic success or unsuccess, I will add that I took as much care and

pains as though I had been writing or compiling a history of the period to do loyal justice to all the historic figures which came within the scope of my dramatic or poetic design. There is not one which I have designedly altered or intentionally modified: it is of course for others to decide whether there is one which is not the living likeness of an actual or imaginable man.

The third part of this trilogy, as far as I know or remember, found favour only with the only man in England who could speak on the subject of historic drama with the authority of an expert and a master. The generally ungracious reception of 'Mary Stuart' gave me neither surprise nor disappointment: the cordial approbation or rather the generous applause of Sir Henry Taylor gave me all and more than all the satisfaction I could ever have looked for in recompense of as much painstaking and conscientious though interesting and enjoyable work as can ever, I should imagine, have been devoted to the completion of any comparable design. Private and personal appreciation I have always thought and often found more valuable and delightful than all possible or imaginable clamour of public praise. This preference will perhaps be supposed to influence my opinion if I avow that I think I have never written anything worthier of such reward than the closing tragedy which may or may not have deserved but which certainly received it.

My first attempt to do something original in

English which might in some degree reproduce for English readers the likeness of a Greek tragedy, with possibly something more of its true poetic life and charm than could have been expected from the authors of 'Caractacus' and 'Merope,' was perhaps too exuberant and effusive in its dialogue, as it certainly was too irregular in the occasional license of its choral verse, to accomplish the design or achieve the success which its author should have aimed at. It may or may not be too long as a poem: it is, I fear, too long for a poem of the kind to which it belongs or aims at belonging. Poetical and mathematical truth are so different that I doubt, however unwilling I may naturally be to doubt, whether it can truthfully be said of 'Atalanta in Calydon' that the whole is greater than any part of it. I hope it may be, and I can honestly say no more. Of 'Erechtheus' I venture to believe with somewhat more confidence that it can. Either poem, by the natural necessity of its kind and structure, has its crowning passage or passages which cannot, however much they may lose by detachment from their context, lose as much as the crowning scene or scenes of an English or Shakespearean play, as opposed to an Æschylean or Sophoclean tragedy, must lose and ought to lose by a similar separation. The two best things in these two Greek plays, the antiphonal lamentation for the dying Meleager and the choral presentation of stormy battle between the forces of land and sea, lose less by such division

from the main body of the poem than would those scenes in 'Bothwell' which deal with the turning-point in the life of Mary Stuart on the central and conclusive day of Carberry Hill.

It might be thought pedantic or pretentious in a modern poet to divide his poems after the old Roman fashion into sections and classes: I must confess that I should like to see this method applied, were it but by way of experiment in a single edition, to the work of the leading poets of our own country and century: to see, for instance, their lyrical and elegiac works ranged and registered apart, each kind in a class of its own, such as is usually reserved, I know not why, for sonnets only. The apparent formality of such an arrangement as would give us, for instance, the odes of Coleridge and Shelley collected into a distinct reservation or division might possibly be more than compensated to the more capable among students by the gain in ethical or spiritual symmetry and æsthetic or intellectual harmony. The ode or hymn—I need remind no probable reader that the terms are synonymous in the speech of Pindar—asserts its primacy or pre-eminence over other forms of poetry in the very name which defines or proclaims it as essentially the song; as something above all less pure and absolute kinds of song by the very nature and law of its being. The Greek form, with its regular arrangement of turn, return, and aftersong, is not to be imitated because it is Greek, but to be adopted because it is best: the very best, as a rule,

that could be imagined for lyrical expression of the thing conceived or lyrical aspiration towards the aim imagined. The rhythmic reason of its rigid but not arbitrary law lies simply and solely in the charm of its regular variations. This can be given in English as clearly and fully, if not so sweetly and subtly, as in Greek; and should, therefore, be expected and required in an English poem of the same nature and proportion. The Sapphic or Alcaic ode, a simple sequence of identical stanzas, could be imitated or revived in Latin by translators or disciples: the scheme of it is exquisitely adequate and sufficient for comparatively short flights of passion or emotion, ardent or contemplative and personal or patriotic; but what can be done in English could not be attempted in Latin. It seems strange to me, our language being what it is, that our literature should be no richer than it is in examples of the higher or at least the more capacious and ambitious kind of ode. Not that the full Pindaric form of threefold or triune structure need be or should be always adopted: but without an accurately corresponsive or antiphonal scheme of music even the master of masters, who is Coleridge, could not produce, even through the superb and enchanting melodies of such a poem as his 'Dejection,' a fit and complete companion, a full and perfect rival, to such a poem as his ode on France.

The title of ode may more properly and fairly be so extended as to cover all lyrical poems in stanzas or couplets than so strained as to include a lawless

lyric of such irregular and uneven build as Coleridge only and hardly could make acceptable or admissible among more natural and lawful forms of poetry. Law, not lawlessness, is the natural condition of poetic life ; but the law must itself be poetic and not pedantic, natural and not conventional. It would be a trivial precision or restriction which would refuse the title of ode to the stanzas of Milton or the heptameters of Aristophanes ; that glorious form of lyric verse which a critic of our own day, as you may not impossibly remember, has likened with such magnificent felicity of comparison to the gallop of the horses of the sun. Nor, I presume, should this title be denied to a poem written in the more modest metre—more modest as being shorter by a foot—which was chosen for those twin poems of antiphonal correspondence in subject and in sound, the ' Hymn to Proserpine ' and the ' Hymn of Man ' : the death-song of spiritual decadence and the birthsong of spiritual renascence. Perhaps, too, my first stanzas addressed to Victor Hugo may be ranked as no less of an ode than that on the insurrection in Candia : a poem which attracted, whether or not it may have deserved, the notice and commendation of Mazzini : from whom I received, on the occasion of its appearance, a letter which was the beginning of my personal intercourse with the man whom I had always revered above all other men on earth. But for this happy accident I might not feel disposed to set much store by my first attempt at a regular ode of orthodox or

legitimate construction; I doubt whether it quite succeeded in evading the criminal risk and the capital offence of formality; at least until the change of note in the closing epode gave fuller scope and freer play of wing to the musical expression. But in my later ode on Athens, absolutely faithful as it is in form to the strictest type and the most stringent law of Pindaric hymnology, I venture to believe that there is no more sign of this infirmity than in the less classically regulated poem on the Armada; which, though built on a new scheme, is nevertheless in its way, I think, a legitimate ode, by right of its regularity in general arrangement of corresponsive divisions. By the test of these two poems I am content that my claims should be decided and my station determined as a lyric poet in the higher sense of the term; a craftsman in the most ambitious line of his art that ever aroused or ever can arouse the emulous aspiration of his kind.

Even had I ever felt the same impulse to attempt and the same ambition to achieve the enterprise of epic or narrative that I had always felt with regard to lyric or dramatic work, I could never have proposed to myself the lowly and unambitious aim of competition with the work of so notable a contemporary workman in the humbler branch of that line as William Morris. No conception could have been further from my mind when I undertook to rehandle the deathless legend of Tristram than that of so modest and preposterous a trial of rivalry. My aim

was simply to present that story, not diluted and debased as it had been in our own time by other hands, but undefaced by improvement and undeformed by transformation, as it was known to the age of Dante wherever the chronicles of romance found hearing, from Ercildoune to Florence : and not in the epic or romantic form of sustained or continuous narrative, but mainly through a succession of dramatic scenes or pictures with descriptive settings or backgrounds: the scenes being of the simplest construction, duologue or monologue, without so much as the classically permissible intervention of a third or fourth person. It is only in our native northern form of narrative poetry, on the old and unrivalled model of the English ballad, that I can claim to have done any work of the kind worth reference : unless the story of Balen should be considered as something other than a series or sequence of ballads. A more plausible objection was brought to bear against 'Tristram of Lyonesse' than that of failure in an enterprise which I never thought of undertaking : the objection of an irreconcilable incongruity between the incidents of the old legend and the meditations on man and nature, life and death, chance and destiny, assigned to a typical hero of chivalrous romance. And this objection might be unanswerable if the slightest attempt had been made to treat the legend as in any possible sense historical or capable of either rational or ideal association with history, such as would assimilate the name and fame

of Arthur to the name and fame of any actual and indisputable Alfred or Albert of the future. But the age when these romances actually lived and flourished side by side with the reviving legends of Thebes and Troy, not in the crude and bloodless forms of Celtic and archaic fancy but in the ampler and manlier developments of Teutonic and mediæval imagination, was the age of Dante and of Chaucer : an age in which men were only too prone to waste their time on the twin sciences of astrology and theology, to expend their energies in the jungle of pseudosophy or the morass of metaphysics. There is surely nothing more incongruous or anachronic in the soliloquy of Tristram after his separation from Iseult than in the lecture of Theseus after the obsequies of Arcite. Both heroes belong to the same impossible age of an imaginary world : and each has an equal right, should it so please his chronicler, to reason in the pauses of action and philosophise in the intervals of adventure. After all, the active men of the actual age of chivalry were not all of them mere muscular machines for martial or pacific exercise of their physical functions or abilities.

You would agree, if the point were worth discussion, that it might savour somewhat of pretention, if not of affectation, to be over particular in arrangement of poems according to subject rather than form, spirit rather than method, or motive rather than execution : and yet there might be some excuse for the fancy or the pedantry of such a classification as

should set apart, for example, poems inspired by the influence of places, whether seen but once or familiar for years or associated with the earliest memories within cognisance or record of the mind, and poems inspired by the emotions of regard or regret for the living or the dead; above all, by the rare and profound passion of reverence and love and faith which labours and rejoices to find utterance in some tributary sacrifice of song. Mere descriptive poetry of the prepense and formal kind is exceptionally if not proverbially liable to incur and to deserve the charge of dullness: it is unnecessary to emphasise or obtrude the personal note, the presence or the emotion of a spectator, but it is necessary to make it felt and keep it perceptible if the poem is to have life in it or even a right to live: felt as in Wordsworth's work it is always, perceptible as it is always in Shelley's. This note is more plain and positive than usual in the poem which attempts—at once a simple and an ambitious attempt—to render the contrast and the concord of night and day on Loch Torridon: it is, I think, duly sensible though implicitly subdued in four poems of the West Undercliff, born or begotten of sunset in the bay and moonlight on the cliffs, noon or morning in a living and shining garden, afternoon or twilight on one left flowerless and forsaken. Not to you or any other poet, nor indeed to the very humblest and simplest lover of poetry, will it seem incongruous or strange, suggestive of imperfect sympathy with life or deficient inspira-

tion from nature, that the very words of Sappho should be heard and recognised in the notes of the nightingales, the glory of the presence of dead poets imagined in the presence of the glory of the sky, the lustre of their advent and their passage felt visible as in vision on the live and limpid floorwork of the cloudless and sunset-coloured sea. The half-brained creature to whom books are other than living things may see with the eyes of a bat and draw with the fingers of a mole his dullard's distinction between books and life: those who live the fuller life of a higher animal than he know that books are to poets as much part of that life as pictures are to painters or as music is to musicians, dead matter though they may be to the spiritually still-born children of dirt and dullness who find it possible and natural to live while dead in heart and brain. Marlowe and Shakespeare, Æschylus and Sappho, do not for us live only on the dusty shelves of libraries.

It is hardly probable that especial and familiar love of places should give any special value to verses written under the influence of their charm: no intimacy of years and no association with the past gave any colour of emotion to many other studies of English land and sea which certainly are no less faithful and possibly have no less spiritual or poetic life in them than the four to which I have just referred, whose localities lie all within the boundary of a mile or so. No contrast could be stronger than that between the majestic and exquisite glory of cliff

and crag, lawn and woodland, garden and lea, to which I have done homage though assuredly I have not done justice in these four poems—'In the Bay,' 'On the Cliffs,' 'A Forsaken Garden,' the dedication of 'The Sisters'—and the dreary beauty, inhuman if not unearthly in its desolation, of the innumerable creeks and inlets, lined and paven with sea-flowers, which make of the salt marshes a fit and funereal setting, a fatal and appropriate foreground, for the supreme desolation of the relics of Dunwich; the beautiful and awful solitude of a wilderness on which the sea has forbidden man to build or live, overtopped and bounded by the tragic and ghastly solitude of a headland on which the sea has forbidden the works of human charity and piety to survive: between the dense and sand-encumbered tides which are eating the desecrated wreck and ruin of them all away, and the matchless magic, the ineffable fascination of the sea whose beauties and delights, whose translucent depths of water and divers-coloured banks of submarine foliage and flowerage, but faintly reflected in the stanzas of the little ode 'Off Shore,' complete the charm of the scenes as faintly sketched or shadowed forth in the poems just named, or the sterner and stranger magic of the seaboard to which tribute was paid in 'An Autumn Vision,' 'A Swimmer's Dream,' 'On the South Coast,' 'Neap-tide': or, again, between the sterile stretches and sad limitless outlook of the shore which faces a hitherto undetermined and interminable sea, and the

joyful and fateful beauty of the seas off Bamborough and the seas about Sark and Guernsey. But if there is enough of the human or personal note to bring into touch the various poems which deal with these various impressions, there may perhaps be no less of it discernible in such as try to render the effect of inland or woodland solitude—the splendid oppression of nature at noon which found utterance of old in words of such singular and everlasting significance as panic and nympholepsy.

The retrospect across many years over the many eulogistic and elegiac poems which I have inscribed or devoted to the commemoration or the panegyric of the living or the dead has this in it of pride and pleasure, that I find little to recant and nothing to repent on reconsideration of them all. If ever a word of tributary thanksgiving for the delight and the benefit of loyal admiration evoked in the spirit of a boy or aroused in the intelligence of a man may seem to exceed the limit of demonstrable accuracy, I have no apology to offer for any such aberration from the safe path of tepid praise or conventional applause. I can truly say with Shelley that I have been fortunate in friendships : I might add if I cared, as he if he had cared might have added, that I have been no less fortunate in my enemies than in my friends ; and this, though by comparison a matter of ineffable insignificance, can hardly be to any rational and right-minded man a matter of positive indifference. Rather should it be always a subject

for thankfulness and self-congratulation if a man can honestly and reasonably feel assured that his friends and foes alike have been always and at almost all points the very men he would have chosen, had choice and foresight been allowed him, at the very outset of his career in life. I should never, when a boy, have dared to dream that as a man I might possibly be admitted to the personal acquaintance of the three living gods, I do not say of my idolatry, for idolatry is a term inapplicable where the gods are real and true, but of my whole-souled and single-hearted worship: and yet, when writing of Landor, of Mazzini, and of Hugo, I write of men who have honoured me with the assurance and the evidence of their cordial and affectionate regard. However inadequate and unworthy may be my tribute to their glory when living and their memory when dead, it is that of one whose gratitude and devotion found unforgettable favour in their sight. And I must be allowed to add that the redeeming quality of entire and absolute sincerity may be claimed on behalf of every line I have written in honour of friends, acquaintances, or strangers. My tribute to Richard Burton was not more genuine in its expression than my tribute to Christina Rossetti. Two noble human creatures more utterly unlike each other it would be unspeakably impossible to conceive; but it was as simply natural for one who honoured them both to do honest homage, before and after they had left us, to

the saintly and secluded poetess as to the adventurous and unsaintly hero. Wherever anything is worthy of honour and thanksgiving it is or it always should be as natural if not as delightful to give thanks and do honour to a stranger as to a friend, to a benefactor long since dead as to a benefactor still alive. To the kindred spirits of Philip Sidney and Aurelio Saffi it was almost as equal a pleasure to offer what tribute I could bring as if Sidney also could have honoured me with his personal friendship. To Tennyson and Browning it was no less fit that I should give honour than that I should do homage to the memory of Bruno, the martyred friend of Sidney. And I can hardly remember any task that I ever took more delight in discharging than I felt in the inadequate and partial payment of a lifelong debt to the marvellous and matchless succession of poets who made the glory of our country incomparable for ever by the work they did between the joyful date of the rout of the Armada and the woful date of the outbreak of civil war.

Charles Lamb, as I need not remind you, wrote for antiquity: nor need you be assured that when I write plays it is with a view to their being acted at the Globe, the Red Bull, or the Black Friars. And whatever may be the dramatic or other defects of 'Marino Faliero' or 'Locrine,' they do certainly bear the same relation to previous plays or attempts at plays on the same subjects as 'King Henry V.' to 'The Famous Victories'—if not as 'King Lear,'

a poem beyond comparison with all other works of man except possibly 'Prometheus' and 'Othello,' to the primitive and infantile scrawl or drivel of 'King Leir and his three daughters.' The fifth act of 'Marino Faliero,' hopelessly impossible as it is from the point of view of modern stagecraft, could hardly have been found too untheatrical, too utterly given over to talk without action, by the audiences which endured and applauded the magnificent monotony of Chapman's eloquence—the fervent and inexhaustible declamation which was offered and accepted as a substitute for study of character and interest of action when his two finest plays, if plays they can be called, found favour with an incredibly intelligent and an inconceivably tolerant audience. The metrical or executive experiment attempted and carried through in 'Locrine' would have been improper to any but a purely and wholly romantic play or poem : I do not think that the life of human character or the lifelikeness of dramatic dialogue has suffered from the bondage of rhyme or has been sacrificed to the exigence of metre. The tragedy of 'The Sisters,' however defective it may be in theatrical interest or progressive action, is the only modern English play I know in which realism in the reproduction of natural dialogue and accuracy in the representation of natural intercourse between men and women of gentle birth and breeding have been found or made compatible with expression in genuine if simple blank verse. It is not for me to decide whether

anything in the figures which play their parts on my imaginary though realistic stage may be worthy of sympathy, attention, or interest: but I think they talk and act as they would have done in life without ever lapsing into platitude or breaking out of nature.

In 'Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards,' I took up a subject long since mishandled by an English dramatist of all but the highest rank, and one which in later days Alfieri had commemorated in a magnificent passage of a wholly unhistoric and somewhat unsatisfactory play. The comparatively slight deviation from historic records in the final catastrophe or consummation of mine is not, I think, to say the least, injurious to the tragic effect or the moral interest of the story.

A writer conscious of any natural command over the musical resources of his language can hardly fail to take such pleasure in the enjoyment of this gift or instinct as the greatest writer and the greatest versifier of our age must have felt at its highest possible degree when composing a musical exercise of such incomparable scope and fullness as 'Les Djinns.' But if he be a poet after the order of Hugo or Coleridge or Shelley, the result will be something very much more than a musical exercise; though indeed, except to such ears as should always be kept closed against poetry, there is no music in verse which has not in it sufficient fullness and ripeness of meaning, sufficient adequacy of emotion or of

thought, to abide the analysis of any other than the purblind scrutiny of prepossession or the squint-eyed inspection of malignity. There may perhaps be somewhat more depth and variety of feeling or reflection condensed into the narrow frame of the poems which compose 'A Century of Roundels' than would be needed to fulfil the epic vacuity of a Chœrilus or a Coluthus. And the form chosen for my only narrative poem was chosen as a test of the truth of my conviction that such work could be done better on the straitest and the strictest principles of verse than on the looser and more slippery lines of mediæval or modern improvisation. The impulsive and irregular verse which had been held sufficient for the stanza selected or accepted by Thornton and by Tennyson seemed capable of improvement and invigoration as a vehicle or a medium for poetic narrative. And I think it has not been found unfit to give something of dignity as well as facility to a narrative which recasts in modern English verse one of the noblest and loveliest old English legends. There is no episode in the cycle of Arthurian romance more genuinely Homeric in its sublime simplicity and its pathetic sublimity of submission to the masterdom of fate than that which I have rather reproduced than recast in 'The Tale of Balen': and impossible as it is to render the text or express the spirit of the Iliad in English prose or rhyme—above all, in English blank verse—it is possible, in such a metre

as was chosen and refashioned for this poem, to give some sense of the rage and rapture of battle for which Homer himself could only find fit and full expression by similitudes drawn like mine from the revels and the terrors and the glories of the sea.

It is nothing to me that what I write should find immediate or general acceptance: it is much to know that on the whole it has won for me the right to address this dedication and inscribe this edition to you.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

POEMS AND BALLADS

TO

MY FRIEND

EDWARD BURNE JONES

THESE POEMS

ARE AFFECTIONATELY AND ADMIRINGLY

DEDICATED

CONTENTS

POEMS AND BALLADS

	PAGE
A Ballad of Life	1
A Ballad of Death	4
Laus Veneris	11
Phædra	27
The Triumph of Time	34
Les Noyades	48
A Leave-Taking	52
Itylus	54
Anactoria	57
Hymn to Proserpine	67
Ilicet	74
Hermaphroditus	79
Fragoletta	82
Rondel	85
Satia te Sanguine	86
A Litany	89
A Lamentation	95
Anima Anceps	100
In the Orchard	102
A Match	104
Faustine	106
A Cameo	113
Song before Death	114
Rococo	115

PAGE

STAGE LOVE 118
THE LEPER 119
A BALLAD OF BURDENS 125
RONDEL 128
BEFORE THE MIRROR 129
EROTION 132
IN MEMORY OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR . . 134
A SONG IN TIME OF ORDER. 1852 . . . 137
A SONG IN TIME OF REVOLUTION. 1860 . . 140
TO VICTOR HUGO 144
BEFORE DAWN 151
DOLORES 154
THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE 169
HESPERIA 173
LOVE AT SEA 179
APRIL 181
BEFORE PARTING 184
THE SUNDEW 186
FÉLISE 188
AN INTERLUDE 199
HENDECASYLLABICS 202
SAPPHICS 204
AT ELEUSIS 208
AUGUST 215
A CHRISTMAS CAROL 218
THE MASQUE OF QUEEN BERSABE 221
ST. DOROTHY 237
THE TWO DREAMS 252
AHOLIBAH 266
LOVE AND SLEEP 272
MADONNA MIA 273
THE KING'S DAUGHTER 276
AFTER DEATH 279
MAY JANET 282

PAGE
The Bloody Son 284
The Sea-Swallows 288
The Year of Love 291
Dedication, 1865 293

POEMS AND BALLADS

Second Series

The Last Oracle 301
In the Bay 307
A Forsaken Garden 318
Relics 322
At a Month's End 325
Sestina 330
The Year of the Rose 332
A Wasted Vigil 335
The Complaint of Lisa 338
For the Feast of Giordano Bruno . . . 344
Ave atque Vale 346
Memorial Verses on the Death of Théophile Gautier 354
Sonnet (with a Copy of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*) . 362
Age and Song (to Barry Cornwall) . . . 363
In Memory of Barry Cornwall 365
Epicede 368
To Victor Hugo 370
Inferiae 371
A Birth-Song 373
Ex-Voto 377
A Ballad of Dreamland 381
Cyril Tourneur 383
A Ballad of François Villon 384
Pastiche 386
Before Sunset 388

PAGE

Song 389
A Vision of Spring in Winter 390
Choriambics 394
At Parting 396
A Song in Season 397
Two Leaders 403
Victor Hugo in 1877 405
Child's Song 406
Triads 407
Four Songs of Four Seasons:—
I. Winter in Northumberland . . . 409
II. Spring in Tuscany 418
III. Summer in Auvergne 421
IV. Autumn in Cornwall 423
The White Czar 425
Rizpah 427
To Louis Kossuth 428
Translations from the French of Villon:—
The Complaint of the Fair Armouress. . 429
A Double Ballad of Good Counsel . . 433
Fragment on Death 435
Ballad of the Lords of Old Time . . 436
Ballad of the Women of Paris . . . 438
Ballad written for a Bridegroom . . 440
Ballad against the Enemies of France . 442
The Dispute of the Heart and Body of François Villon 444
Epistle in form of a Ballad to his Friends 446
The Epitaph in form of a Ballad . . 448
From Victor Hugo 450
Nocturne 451
Théophile Gautier 453
Ode 454
In Obitum Theophili Poetæ 456

PAGE

Ad Catullum 457
Dedication, 1878 458

POEMS AND BALLADS

Third Series

March: an Ode 465
The Commonweal 470
The Armada 483
To a Seamew 507
Pan and Thalassius 511
A Ballad of Bath 518
In a Garden 520
A Rhyme 522
Baby-Bird 524
Olive 526
A Word with the Wind 530
Neap-Tide 534
By the Wayside 537
Night 539
In Time of Mourning 540
The Interpreters 541
The Recall 544
By Twilight 545
A Baby's Epitaph 546
On the Death of Sir Henry Taylor 547
In Memory of John William Inchbold . . 548
New Year's Day 553
To Sir Richard F. Burton 554
Nell Gwyn 555
Caliban on Ariel 556
The Weary Wedding 557
The Winds 566
A Lyke-wake Song 567

PAGE
A Reiver's Neck-Verse 568
The Witch-Mother 569
The Bride's Tragedy 572
A Jacobite's Farewell 577
A Jacobite's Exile 578
The Tyneside Widow 582
Dedication 585

SONGS OF THE SPRINGTIDES

To Edward John Trelawny 589
Thalassius 591
On the Cliffs 607
The Garden of Cymodoce 622
Birthday Ode 637

SONGS BEFORE SUNRISE

Prelude 663
The Eve of Revolution 670
A Watch in the Night 687
Super Flumina Babylonis 694
The Halt before Rome 700
Mentana: First Anniversary 712
Blessed among Women 716
The Litany of Nations 724
Hertha 732
Before a Crucifix 741
Tenebræ 748
Hymn of Man 753
The Pilgrims 765
Armand Barbès 769
Quia Multum Amavit 771
Genesis 777

PAGE
To Walt Whitman in America 780
Christmas Antiphones:—
I. In Church 786
II. Outside Church 789
III. Beyond Church 793
A New Year's Message 797
Mater Dolorosa 800
Mater Triumphalis 804
A Marching Song 811
Siena 820
Cor Cordium 831
In San Lorenzo 832
Tiresias 833
The Song of the Standard 847
On the Downs 851
Messidor 857
Ode on the Insurrection in Candia . . . 860
"Non Dolet" 869
Eurydice 870
An Appeal 871
Perinde ac Cadaver 875
Monotones 879
The Oblation 881
A Year's Burden 882
Epilogue 886
Notes 897

SONGS OF TWO NATIONS

A Song of Italy 909
Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic 939
Diræ:—
I. A Dead King 953
II. A Year After 954

PAGE

III. Peter's Pence from Perugia . . . 955
IV. Papal Allocution 956
V. The Burden of Austria 957
VI. Locusta 958
VII. Celæno 959
VIII. A Choice 960
IX. The Augurs 961
X. A Counsel 962
XI. The Moderates 963
XII. Intercession 964
XIII. The Saviour of Society 968
XIV. Mentana: Second Anniversary . . 970
XV. Mentana: Third Anniversary . . . 972
XVI. The Descent into Hell 974
XVII. Apologia 976

A BALLAD OF LIFE

I FOUND in dreams a place of wind and flowers,
  Full of sweet trees and colour of glad grass,
  In midst whereof there was
A lady clothed like summer with sweet hours.
Her beauty, fervent as a fiery moon,
  Made my blood burn and swoon
    Like a flame rained upon.
Sorrow had filled her shaken eyelids' blue,
And her mouth's sad red heavy rose all through
    Seemed sad with glad things gone.

She held a little cithern by the strings,
  Shaped heartwise, strung with subtle-coloured hair
  Of some dead lute-player
That in dead years had done delicious things.
The seven strings were named accordingly ;
  The first string charity,
    The second tenderness,
The rest were pleasure, sorrow, sleep, and sin,
And loving-kindness, that is pity's kin
    And is most pitiless.

There were three men with her, each garmented
  With gold and shod with gold upon the feet ;
  And with plucked ears of wheat
The first man's hair was wound upon his head :

His face was red, and his mouth curled and sad ;
All his gold garment had
Pale stains of dust and rust.
A riven hood was pulled across his eyes ;
The token of him being upon this wise
Made for a sign of Lust.

The next was Shame, with hollow heavy face
Coloured like green wood when flame kindles it.
He hath such feeble feet
They may not well endure in any place.
His face was full of grey old miseries,
And all his blood's increase
Was even increase of pain.
The last was Fear, that is akin to Death ;
He is Shame's friend, and always as Shame saith
Fear answers him again.

My soul said in me ; This is marvellous,
Seeing the air's face is not so delicate
Nor the sun's grace so great,
If sin and she be kin or amorous.
And seeing where maidens served her on their knees,
I bade one crave of these
To know the cause thereof.
Then Fear said : I am Pity that was dead.
And Shame said : I am Sorrow comforted.
And Lust said : I am Love.

Thereat her hands began a lute-playing
And her sweet mouth a song in a strange tongue ;
And all the while she sung
There was no sound but long tears following

Long tears upon men's faces, waxen white
With extreme sad delight.
But those three following men
Became as men raised up among the dead ;
Great glad mouths open and fair cheeks made red
With child's blood come again.

Then I said : Now assuredly I see
My lady is perfect, and transfigureth
All sin and sorrow and death,
Making them fair as her own eyelids be,
Or lips wherein my whole soul's life abides ;
Or as her sweet white sides
And bosom carved to kiss.
Now therefore, if her pity further me,
Doubtless for her sake all my days shall be
As righteous as she is.

Forth, ballad, and take roses in both arms,
Even till the top rose touch thee in the throat
Where the least thornprick harms ;
And girdled in thy golden singing-coat,
Come thou before my lady and say this ;
Borgia, thy gold hair's colour burns in me,
Thy mouth makes beat my blood in feverish rhymes ;
Therefore so many as these roses be,
Kiss me so many times.
Then it may be, seeing how sweet she is,
That she will stoop herself none otherwise
Than a blown vine-branch doth,
And kiss thee with soft laughter on thine eyes,
Ballad, and on thy mouth.

A BALLAD OF DEATH

Kneel down, fair Love, and fill thyself with tears,
Girdle thyself with sighing for a girth
Upon the sides of mirth,
Cover thy lips and eyelids, let thine ears
Be filled with rumour of people sorrowing ;
Make thee soft raiment out of woven sighs
Upon the flesh to cleave,
Set pains therein and many a grievous thing,
And many sorrows after each his wise
For armlet and for gorget and for sleeve.

O Love's lute heard about the lands of death,
Left hanged upon the trees that were therein ;
O Love and Time and Sin,
Three singing mouths that mourn now underbreath,
Three lovers, each one evil spoken of ;
O smitten lips wherethrough this voice of mine
Came softer with her praise ;
Abide a little for our lady's love.
The kisses of her mouth were more than wine,
And more than peace the passage of her days.

O Love, thou knowest if she were good to see.
O Time, thou shalt not find in any land
Till, cast out of thine hand,
The sunlight and the moonlight fail from thee,

Another woman fashioned like as this.
O Sin, thou knowest that all thy shame in her
Was made a goodly thing ;
Yea, she caught Shame and shamed him with her kiss,
With her fair kiss, and lips much lovelier
Than lips of amorous roses in late spring.

By night there stood over against my bed
Queen Venus with a hood striped gold and black,
Both sides drawn fully back
From brows wherein the sad blood failed of red,
And temples drained of purple and full of death.
Her curled hair had the wave of sea-water
And the sea's gold in it.
Her eyes were as a dove's that sickeneth.
Strewn dust of gold she had shed over her,
And pearl and purple and amber on her feet.

Upon her raiment of dyed sendaline
Were painted all the secret ways of love
And covered things thereof,
That hold delight as grape-flowers hold their wine ;
Red mouths of maidens and red feet of doves,
And brides that kept within the bride-chamber
Their garment of soft shame,
And weeping faces of the wearied loves
That swoon in sleep and awake wearier,
With heat of lips and hair shed out like flame.

The tears that through her eyelids fell on me
Made mine own bitter where they ran between
As blood had fallen therein,
She saying ; Arise, lift up thine eyes and see

If any glad thing be or any good
Now the best thing is taken forth of us ;
Even she to whom all praise
Was as one flower in a great multitude,
One glorious flower of many and glorious,
One day found gracious among many days :

Even she whose handmaiden was Love—to whom
At kissing times across her stateliest bed
Kings bowed themselves and shed
Pale wine, and honey with the honeycomb,
And spikenard bruised for a burnt-offering ;
Even she between whose lips the kiss became
As fire and frankincense ;
Whose hair was as gold raiment on a king,
Whose eyes were as the morning purged with flame,
Whose eyelids as sweet savour issuing thence.

Then I beheld, and lo on the other side
My lady's likeness crowned and robed and dead.
Sweet still, but now not red,
Was the shut mouth whereby men lived and died.
And sweet, but emptied of the blood's blue shade,
The great curled eyelids that withheld her eyes.
And sweet, but like spoilt gold,
The weight of colour in her tresses weighed.
And sweet, but as a vesture with new dyes,
The body that was clothed with love of old.

Ah ! that my tears filled all her woven hair
And all the hollow bosom of her gown—
Ah ! that my tears ran down
Even to the place where many kisses were,
Even where her parted breast-flowers have place,

Even where they are cloven apart—who knows not
this?
Ah! the flowers cleave apart
And their sweet fills the tender interspace;
Ah! the leaves grown thereof were things to kiss
Ere their fine gold was tarnished at the heart.

Ah! in the days when God did good to me,
Each part about her was a righteous thing;
Her mouth an almsgiving,
The glory of her garments charity,
The beauty of her bosom a good deed,
In the good days when God kept sight of us;
Love lay upon her eyes,
And on that hair whereof the world takes heed;
And all her body was more virtuous
Than souls of women fashioned otherwise.

Now, ballad, gather poppies in thine hands
And sheaves of brier and many rusted sheaves
Rain-rotten in rank lands,
Waste marigold and late unhappy leaves
And grass that fades ere any of it be mown;
And when thy bosom is filled full thereof
Seek out Death's face ere the light altereth,
And say "My master that was thrall to Love
Is become thrall to Death."
Bow down before him, ballad, sigh and groan,
But make no sojourn in thy outgoing;
For haply it may be
That when thy feet return at evening
Death shall come in with thee.

LAUS VENERIS

Lors dit en plourant ; Hélas trop malheureux homme et mauldict pescheur, oncques ne verrai-je clémence et miséricorde de Dieu. Ores m'en irai-je d'icy et me cacherai dedans le mont Horsel, en requérant de faveur et d'amoureuse merci ma doulce dame Vénus, car pour son amour serai-je bien à tout jamais damné en enfer. Voicy la fin de tous mes faicts d'armes et de toutes mes belles chansons. Hélas, trop belle estoyt la face de ma dame et ses yeulx, et en mauvais jour je vis ces chouses-là. Lors s'en alla tout en gémissant et se retourna chez elle, et là vescut tristement en grand amour près de sa dame. Puis après advint que le pape vit un jour esclater sur son baston force belles fleurs rouges et blanches et maints boutons de feuilles, et ainsi vit-il reverdir toute l'escorce. Ce dont il eut grande crainte et moult s'en esmut, et grande pitié lui prit de ce chevalier qui s'en estoyt départi sans espoir comme un homme misérable et damné. Doncques envoya force messaigers devers luy pour le ramener, disant qu'il aurait de Dieu grace et bonne absolution de son grand pesché d'amour. Mais oncques plus ne le virent ; car toujours demeura ce pauvre chevalier auprès de Vénus la haulte et forte déesse ès flancs de la montagne amoureuse.

Livre des grandes merveilles d'amour, escript en latin et en françoys par Maistre Antoine Gaget. 1530.

LAUS VENERIS

Asleep or waking is it? for her neck,
Kissed over close, wears yet a purple speck
  Wherein the pained blood falters and goes out,
Soft, and stung softly—fairer for a fleck.

But though my lips shut sucking on the place,
There is no vein at work upon her face;
  Her eyelids are so peaceable, no doubt
Deep sleep has warmed her blood through all its ways.

Lo, this is she that was the world's delight;
The old grey years were parcels of her might;
  The strewings of the ways wherein she trod
Were the twain seasons of the day and night.

Lo, she was thus when her clear limbs enticed
All lips that now grow sad with kissing Christ,
  Stained with blood fallen from the feet of God,
The feet and hands whereat our souls were priced.

Alas, Lord, surely thou art great and fair.
But lo her wonderfully woven hair!
  And thou didst heal us with thy piteous kiss;
But see now, Lord; her mouth is lovelier.

She is right fair; what hath she done to thee?
Nay, fair Lord Christ, lift up thine eyes and see;
  Had now thy mother such a lip—like this?
Thou knowest how sweet a thing it is to me.

Inside the Horsel here the air is hot;
Right little peace one hath for it, God wot;
  The scented dusty daylight burns the air,
And my heart chokes me till I hear it not.

Behold, my Venus, my soul's body, lies
With my love laid upon her garment-wise,
  Feeling my love in all her limbs and hair
And shed between her eyelids through her eyes.

She holds my heart in her sweet open hands
Hanging asleep; hard by her head there stands,
  Crowned with gilt thorns and clothed with flesh like fire,
Love, wan as foam blown up the salt burnt sands—

Hot as the brackish waifs of yellow spume
That shift and steam—loose clots of arid fume
  From the sea's panting mouth of dry desire;
There stands he, like one labouring at a loom.

The warp holds fast across; and every thread
That makes the woof up has dry specks of red;
  Always the shuttle cleaves clean through, and he
Weaves with the hair of many a ruined head.

Love is not glad nor sorry, as I deem;
Labouring he dreams, and labours in the dream,
  Till when the spool is finished, lo I see
His web, reeled off, curls and goes out like steam

Night falls like fire ; the heavy lights run low,
And as they drop, my blood and body so
Shake as the flame shakes, full of days and hours
That sleep not neither weep they as they go.

Ah yet would God this flesh of mine might be
Where air might wash and long leaves cover me,
Where tides of grass break into foam of flowers,
Or where the wind's feet shine along the sea.

Ah yet would God that stems and roots were bred
Out of my weary body and my head,
That sleep were sealed upon me with a seal,
And I were as the least of all his dead.

Would God my blood were dew to feed the grass,
Mine ears made deaf and mine eyes blind as glass,
My body broken as a turning wheel,
And my mouth stricken ere it saith Alas !

Ah God, that love were as a flower or flame,
That life were as the naming of a name,
That death were not more pitiful than desire,
That these things were not one thing and the same !

Behold now, surely somewhere there is death :
For each man hath some space of years, he saith,
A little space of time ere time expire,
A little day, a little way of breath.

And lo, between the sundawn and the sun,
His day's work and his night's work are undone ;
And lo, between the nightfall and the light,
He is not, and none knoweth of such an one.

Ah God, that I were as all souls that be,
As any herb or leaf of any tree,
  As men that toil through hours of labouring night,
As bones of men under the deep sharp sea.

Outside it must be winter among men ;
For at the gold bars of the gates again
  I heard all night and all the hours of it
The wind's wet wings and fingers drip with rain.

Knights gather, riding sharp for cold ; I know
The ways and woods are strangled with the snow ;
  And with short song the maidens spin and sit
Until Christ's birthnight, lily-like, arow.

The scent and shadow shed about me make
The very soul in all my senses ache ;
  The hot hard night is fed upon my breath,
And sleep beholds me from afar awake.

Alas, but surely where the hills grow deep,
Or where the wild ways of the sea are steep,
  Or in strange places somewhere there is death,
And on death's face the scattered hair of sleep.

There lover-like with lips and limbs that meet
They lie, they pluck sweet fruit of life and eat ;
  But me the hot and hungry days devour,
And in my mouth no fruit of theirs is sweet.

No fruit of theirs, but fruit of my desire,
For her love's sake whose lips through mine respire ;
  Her eyelids on her eyes like flower on flower,
Mine eyelids on mine eyes like fire on fire.

So lie we, not as sleep that lies by death,
With heavy kisses and with happy breath ;
Not as man lies by woman, when the bride
Laughs low for love's sake and the words he saith.

For she lies, laughing low with love ; she lies
And turns his kisses on her lips to sighs,
To sighing sound of lips unsatisfied,
And the sweet tears are tender with her eyes.

Ah, not as they, but as the souls that were
Slain in the old time, having found her fair ;
Who, sleeping with her lips upon their eyes,
Heard sudden serpents hiss across her hair.

Their blood runs round the roots of time like rain :
She casts them forth and gathers them again ;
With nerve and bone she weaves and multiplies
Exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain.

Her little chambers drip with flower-like red,
Her girdles, and the chaplets of her head,
Her armlets and her anklets ; with her feet
She tramples all that winepress of the dead.

Her gateways smoke with fume of flowers and fires,
With loves burnt out and unassuaged desires ;
Between her lips the steam of them is sweet,
The languor in her ears of many lyres.

Her beds are full of perfume and sad sound,
Her doors are made with music, and barred round
With sighing and with laughter and with tears,
With tears whereby strong souls of men are bound.

There is the knight Adonis that was slain ;
With flesh and blood she chains him for a chain ;
  The body and the spirit in her ears
Cry, for her lips divide him vein by vein.

Yea, all she slayeth ; yea, every man save me ;
Me, love, thy lover that must cleave to thee
  Till the ending of the days and ways of earth,
The shaking of the sources of the sea.

Me, most forsaken of all souls that fell ;
Me, satiated with things insatiable ;
  Me, for whose sake the extreme hell makes mirth,
Yea, laughter kindles at the heart of hell.

Alas thy beauty ! for thy mouth's sweet sake
My soul is bitter to me, my limbs quake
  As water, as the flesh of men that weep,
As their heart's vein whose heart goes nigh to break.

Ah God, that sleep with flower-sweet finger-tips
Would crush the fruit of death upon my lips ;
  Ah God, that death would tread the grapes of sleep
And wring their juice upon me as it drips.

There is no change of cheer for many days,
But change of chimes high up in the air, that sways
  Rung by the running fingers of the wind ;
And singing sorrows heard on hidden ways.

Day smiteth day in twain, night sundereth night,
And on mine eyes the dark sits as the light ;
  Yea, Lord, thou knowest I know not, having sinned,
If heaven be clean or unclean in thy sight.

Yea, as if earth were sprinkled over me,
Such chafed harsh earth as chokes a sandy sea,
  Each pore doth yearn, and the dried blood thereof
Gasps by sick fits, my heart swims heavily,

There is a feverish famine in my veins ;
Below her bosom, where a crushed grape stains
  The white and blue, there my lips caught and clove
An hour since, and what mark of me remains ?

I dare not always touch her, lest the kiss
Leave my lips charred. Yea, Lord, a little bliss,
  Brief bitter bliss, one hath for a great sin ;
Nathless thou knowest how sweet a thing it is.

Sin, is it sin whereby men's souls are thrust
Into the pit ? yet had I a good trust
  To save my soul before it slipped therein,
Trod under by the fire-shod feet of lust.

For if mine eyes fail and my soul takes breath,
I look between the iron sides of death
  Into sad hell where all sweet love hath end,
All but the pain that never finisheth.

There are the naked faces of great kings,
The singing folk with all their lute-playings ;
  There when one cometh he shall have to friend
The grave that covets and the worm that clings.

There sit the knights that were so great of hand,
The ladies that were queens of fair green land,
  Grown grey and black now, brought unto the dust,
Soiled, without raiment, clad about with sand.

There is one end for all of them ; they sit
Naked and sad, they drink the dregs of it,
  Trodden as grapes in the wine-press of lust.
Trampled and trodden by the fiery feet.

I see the marvellous mouth whereby there fell
Cities and people whom the gods loved well,
  Yet for her sake on them the fire gat hold,
And for their sakes on her the fire of hell.

And softer than the Egyptian lote-leaf is,
The queen whose face was worth the world to kiss,
  Wearing at breast a suckling snake of gold ;
And large pale lips of strong Semiramis,

Curled like a tiger's that curl back to feed ;
Red only where the last kiss made them bleed ;
  Her hair most thick with many a carven gem,
Deep in the mane, great-chested, like a steed.

Yea, with red sin the faces of them shine ;
But in all these there was no sin like mine ;
  No, not in all the strange great sins of them
That made the wine-press froth and foam with wine.

For I was of Christ's choosing, I God's knight,
No blinkard heathen stumbling for scant light ;
  I can well see, for all the dusty days
Gone past, the clean great time of goodly fight.

I smell the breathing battle sharp with blows,
With shriek of shafts and snapping short of bows ;
  The fair pure sword smites out in subtle ways,
Sounds and long lights are shed between the rows

Of beautiful mailed men ; the edged light slips,
Most like a snake that takes short breath and dips
  Sharp from the beautifully bending head,
With all its gracious body lithe as lips

That curl in touching you ; right in this wise
My sword doth, seeming fire in mine own eyes,
  Leaving all colours in them brown and red
And flecked with death ; then the keen breaths like
    sighs,

The caught-up choked dry laughters following them,
When all the fighting face is grown a flame
  For pleasure, and the pulse that stuns the ears,
And the heart's gladness of the goodly game.

Let me think yet a little ; I do know
These things were sweet, but sweet such years ago,
  Their savour is all turned now into tears ;
Yea, ten years since, where the blue ripples blow,

The blue curled eddies of the blowing Rhine,
I felt the sharp wind shaking grass and vine
  Touch my blood too, and sting me with delight
Through all this waste and weary body of mine

That never feels clear air ; right gladly then
I rode alone, a great way off my men,
  And heard the chiming bridle smite and smite,
And gave each rhyme thereof some rhyme again,

Till my song shifted to that iron one ;
Seeing there rode up between me and the sun
  Some certain of my foe's men, for his three
White wolves across their painted coats did run.

The first red-bearded, with square cheeks—alack,
I made my knave's blood turn his beard to black ;
  The slaying of him was a joy to see :
Perchance too, when at night he came not back,

Some woman fell a-weeping, whom this thief
Would beat when he had drunken ; yet small grief
  Hath any for the ridding of such knaves ;
Yea, if one wept, I doubt her teen was brief.

This bitter love is sorrow in all lands,
Draining of eyelids, wringing of drenched hands,
  Sighing of hearts and filling up of graves ;
A sign across the head of the world he stands,

An one that hath a plague-mark on his brows ;
Dust and spilt blood do track him to his house
  Down under earth ; sweet smells of lip and cheek,
Like a sweet snake's breath made more poisonous

With chewing of some perfumed deadly grass,
Are shed all round his passage if he pass,
  And their quenched savour leaves the whole soul
    weak,
Sick with keen guessing whence the perfume was.

As one who hidden in deep sedge and reeds
Smells the rare scent made where a panther feeds,
  And tracking ever slotwise the warm smell
Is snapped upon by the sweet mouth and bleeds,

His head far down the hot sweet throat of her—
So one tracks love, whose breath is deadlier,
  And lo, one springe and you are fast in hell,
Fast as the gin's grip of a wayfarer.

I think now, as the heavy hours decease
One after one, and bitter thoughts increase
  One upon one, of all sweet finished things ;
The breaking of the battle ; the long peace

Wherein we sat clothed softly, each man's hair
Crowned with green leaves beneath white hoods of
    vair ;
  The sounds of sharp spears at great tourneyings,
And noise of singing in the late sweet air.

I sang of love too, knowing nought thereof ;
" Sweeter," I said, " the little laugh of love
  Than tears out of the eyes of Magdalen,
Or any fallen feather of the Dove.

" The broken little laugh that spoils a kiss,
The ache of purple pulses, and the bliss
  Of blinded eyelids that expand again—
Love draws them open with those lips of his,

" Lips that cling hard till the kissed face has grown
Of one same fire and colour with their own ;
  Then ere one sleep, appeased with sacrifice,
Where his lips wounded, there his lips atone."

I sang these things long since and knew them not ;
" Lo, here is love, or there is love, God wot,
  This man and that finds favour in his eyes,"
I said, " but I, what guerdon have I got ?

" The dust of praise that is blown everywhere
In all men's faces with the common air ;
  The bay-leaf that wants chafing to be sweet
Before they wind it in a singer's hair."

So that one dawn I rode forth sorrowing ;
I had no hope but of some evil thing,
And so rode slowly past the windy wheat
And past the vineyard and the water-spring,

Up to the Horsel. A great elder-tree
Held back its heaps of flowers to let me see
The ripe tall grass, and one that walked therein,
Naked, with hair shed over to the knee.

She walked between the blossom and the grass ;
I knew the beauty of her, what she was,
The beauty of her body and her sin,
And in my flesh the sin of hers, alas !

Alas ! for sorrow is all the end of this.
O sad kissed mouth, how sorrowful it is !
O breast whereat some suckling sorrow clings,
Red with the bitter blossom of a kiss !

Ah, with blind lips I felt for you, and found
About my neck your hands and hair enwound,
The hands that stifle and the hair that stings
I felt them fasten sharply without sound.

Yea, for my sin I had great store of bliss :
Rise up, make answer for me, let thy kiss
Seal my lips hard from speaking of my sin,
Lest one go mad to hear how sweet it is.

Yet I waxed faint with fume of barren bowers,
And murmuring of the heavy-headed hours ;
And let the dove's beak fret and peck within
My lips in vain, and Love shed fruitless flowers.

So that God looked upon me when your hands
Were hot about me ; yea, God brake my bands
To save my soul alive, and I came forth
Like a man blind and naked in strange lands

That hears men laugh and weep, and knows not whence
Nor wherefore, but is broken in his sense ;
Howbeit I met folk riding from the north
Towards Rome, to purge them of their souls' offence,

And rode with them, and spake to none ; the day
Stunned me like lights upon some wizard way,
And ate like fire mine eyes and mine eyesight ;
So rode I, hearing all these chant and pray,

And marvelled ; till before us rose and fell
White cursed hills, like outer skirts of hell
Seen where men's eyes look through the day to night,
Like a jagged shell's lips, harsh, untunable,

Blown in between by devils' wrangling breath ;
Nathless we won well past that hell and death,
Down to the sweet land where all airs are good,
Even unto Rome where God's grace tarrieth.

Then came each man and worshipped at his knees
Who in the Lord God's likeness bears the keys
To bind or loose, and called on Christ's shed blood,
And so the sweet-souled father gave him ease.

But when I came I fell down at his feet,
Saying, " Father, though the Lord's blood be right sweet,
The spot it takes not off the panther's skin,
Nor shall an Ethiop's stain be bleached with it.

" Lo, I have sinned and have spat out at God,
Wherefore his hand is heavier and his rod
More sharp because of mine exceeding sin,
And all his raiment redder than bright blood

" Before mine eyes ; yea, for my sake I wot
The heat of hell is waxen seven times hot
Through my great sin." Then spake he some sweet word,
Giving me cheer ; which thing availed me not ,

Yea, scarce I wist if such indeed were said ;
For when I ceased—lo, as one newly dead
Who hears a great cry out of hell, I heard
The crying of his voice across my head.

" Until this dry shred staff, that hath no whit
Of leaf nor bark, bear blossom and smell sweet,
Seek thou not any mercy in God's sight,
For so long shalt thou be cast out from it."

Yea, what if dried-up stems wax red and green,
Shall that thing be which is not nor has been ?
Yea, what if sapless bark wax green and white,
Shall any good fruit grow upon my sin ?

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Nay, though sweet fruit were plucked of a dry tree,
And though men drew sweet waters of the sea,
  There should not grow sweet leaves on this dead
    stem,
This waste wan body and shaken soul of me.

Yea, though God search it warily enough,
There is not one sound thing in all thereof ;
  Though he search all my veins through, searching
    them
He shall find nothing whole therein but love.

For I came home right heavy, with small cheer,
And lo my love, mine own soul's heart, more dear
  Than mine own soul, more beautiful than God,
Who hath my being between the hands of her—

Fair still, but fair for no man saving me,
As when she came out of the naked sea
  Making the foam as fire whereon she trod,
And as the inner flower of fire was she.

Yea, she laid hold upon me, and her mouth
Clove unto mine as soul to body doth,
  And, laughing, made her lips luxurious ;
Her hair had smells of all the sunburnt south,

Strange spice and flower, strange savour of crushed
    fruit,
And perfume the swart kings tread underfoot
  For pleasure when their minds wax amorous,
Charred frankincense and grated sandal-root.

And I forgot fear and all weary things,
All ended prayers and perished thanksgivings,
  Feeling her face with all her eager hair
Cleave to me, clinging as a fire that clings

To the body and to the raiment, burning them ;
As after death I know that such-like flame
  Shall cleave to me for ever ; yea, what care,
Albeit I burn then, having felt the same ?

Ah love, there is no better life than this ;
To have known love, how bitter a thing it is,
  And afterward be cast out of God's sight ;
Yea, these that know not, shall they have such bliss

High up in barren heaven before his face
As we twain in the heavy-hearted place,
  Remembering love and all the dead delight,
And all that time was sweet with for a space ?

For till the thunder in the trumpet be,
Soul may divide from body, but not we
  One from another ; I hold thee with my hand,
I let mine eyes have all their will of thee,

I seal myself upon thee with my might,
Abiding alway out of all men's sight
  Until God loosen over sea and land
The thunder of the trumpets of the night.

EXPLICIT LAUS VENERIS.

PHÆDRA

HIPPOLYTUS ; PHÆDRA ; CHORUS OF TRŒZENIAN WOMEN

HIPPOLYTUS.

Lay not thine hand upon me ; let me go ;
Take off thine eyes that put the gods to shame ;
What, wilt thou turn my loathing to thy death ?

PHÆDRA.

Nay, I will never loosen hold nor breathe
Till thou have slain me ; godlike for great brows
Thou art, and thewed as gods are, with clear hair :
Draw now thy sword and smite me as thou art god,
For verily I am smitten of other gods,
Why not of thee ?

CHORUS.

O queen, take heed of words ;
Why wilt thou eat the husk of evil speech ?
Wear wisdom for that veil about thy head
And goodness for the binding of thy brows.

PHÆDRA.

Nay, but this god hath cause enow to smite ;
If he will slay me, baring breast and throat,
I lean toward the stroke with silent mouth
And a great heart. Come, take thy sword and slay ;

Let me not starve between desire and death,
But send me on my way with glad wet lips ;
For in the vein-drawn ashen-coloured palm
Death's hollow hand holds water of sweet draught
To dip and slake dried mouths at, as a deer
Specked red from thorns laps deep and loses pain.
Yea. if mine own blood ran upon my mouth,
I would drink that. Nay, but be swift with me ;
Set thy sword here between the girdle and breast,
For I shall grow a poison if I live.
Are not my cheeks as grass, my body pale,
And my breath like a dying poisoned man's ?
O whatsoever of godlike names thou be,
By thy chief name I charge thee, thou strong god,
And bid thee slay me. Strike, up to the gold,
Up to the hand-grip of the hilt ; strike here ;
For I am Cretan of my birth ; strike now ;
For I am Theseus' wife ; stab up to the rims,
I am born daughter to Pasiphae.
See thou spare not for greatness of my blood,
Nor for the shining letters of my name :
Make thy sword sure inside thine hand and smite,
For the bright writing of my name is black,
And I am sick with hating the sweet sun.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Let not this woman wail and cleave to me,
That am no part of the gods' wrath with her ;
Loose ye her hands from me lest she take hurt.

CHORUS.

Lady, this speech and majesty are twain ;
Pure shame is of one counsel with the gods.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Man is as beast when shame stands off from him.

PHÆDRA.

Man, what have I to do with shame or thee?
I am not of one counsel with the gods.
I am their kin, I have strange blood in me,
I am not of their likeness nor of thine:
My veins are mixed, and therefore am I mad,
Yea therefore chafe and turn on mine own flesh,
Half of a woman made with half a god.
But thou wast hewn out of an iron womb
And fed with molten mother-snow for milk.
A sword was nurse of thine; Hippolyta,
That had the spear to father, and the axe
To bridesman, and wet blood of sword-slain men
For wedding-water out of a noble well,
Even she did bear thee, thinking of a sword,
And thou wast made a man mistakingly.
Nay, for I love thee, I will have thy hands,
Nay, for I will not loose thee, thou art sweet,
Thou art my son, I am thy father's wife,
I ache toward thee with a bridal blood,
The pulse is heavy in all my married veins,
My whole face beats, I will feed full of thee,
My body is empty of ease, I will be fed,
I am burnt to the bone with love, thou shalt not go,
I am heartsick, and mine eyelids prick mine eyes,
Thou shalt not sleep nor eat nor say a word
Till thou hast slain me. I am not good to live.

CHORUS.

This is an evil born with all its teeth,
When love is cast out of the bound of love.

HIPPOLYTUS.

There is no hate that is so hateworthy.

PHÆDRA.

I pray thee turn that hate of thine my way,
I hate not it nor anything of thine.
Lo, maidens, how he burns about the brow,
And draws the chafing sword-strap down his hand.
What wilt thou do? wilt thou be worse than death?
Be but as sweet as is the bitterest,
The most dispiteous out of all the gods,
I am well pleased. Lo, do I crave so much?
I do but bid thee be unmerciful,
Even the one thing thou art. Pity me not:
Thou wert not quick to pity. Think of me
As of a thing thy hounds are keen upon
In the wet woods between the windy ways,
And slay me for a spoil. This body of mine
Is worth a wild beast's fell or hide of hair,
And spotted deeper than a panther's grain.
I were but dead if thou wert pure indeed;
I pray thee by thy cold green holy crown
And by the fillet-leaves of Artemis.
Nay, but thou wilt not. Death is not like thee,
Albeit men hold him worst of all the gods.
For of all gods Death only loves not gifts,[1]
Nor with burnt-offering nor blood-sacrifice
Shalt thou do aught to get thee grace of him;
He will have nought of altar and altar-song,
And from him only of all the lords in heaven
Persuasion turns a sweet averted mouth.

[1] Æsch. Fr. Niobe:—
μόνος θεῶν γὰρ Θάνατος οὐ δώρων ἐρᾷ, κ.τ.λ.

But thou art worse : from thee with baffled breath
Back on my lips my prayer falls like a blow,
And beats upon them, dumb. What shall I say?
There is no word I can compel thee with
To do me good and slay me. But take heed ;
I say, be wary ; look between thy feet,
Lest a snare take them though the ground be good.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Shame may do most where fear is found most weak ;
That which for shame's sake yet I have not done,
Shall it be done for fear's? Take thine own way ;
Better the foot slip than the whole soul swerve.

PHÆDRA.

The man is choice and exquisite of mouth ;
Yet in the end a curse shall curdle it.

CHORUS.

He goes with cloak upgathered to the lip,
Holding his eye as with some ill in sight.

PHÆDRA.

A bitter ill he hath i' the way thereof,
And it shall burn the sight out as with fire.

CHORUS.

Speak no such word whereto mischance is kin.

PHÆDRA.

Out of my heart and by fate's leave I speak.

CHORUS.

Set not thy heart to follow after fate.

PHÆDRA.

O women, O sweet people of this land,
O goodly city and pleasant ways thereof,
And woods with pasturing grass and great well-heads,
And hills with light and night between your leaves,
And winds with sound and silence in your lips,
And earth and water and all immortal things,
I take you to my witness what I am.
There is a god about me like as fire,
Sprung whence, who knoweth, or who hath heart to say?
A god more strong than whom slain beasts can soothe,
Or honey, or any spilth of blood-like wine,
Nor shall one please him with a whitened brow
Nor wheat nor wool nor aught of plaited leaf.
For like my mother am I stung and slain,
And round my cheeks have such red malady
And on my lips such fire and foam as hers.
This is that Ate out of Amathus
That breeds up death and gives it one for love.
She hath slain mercy, and for dead mercy's sake
(Being frighted with this sister that was slain)
Flees from before her fearful-footed shame,
And will not bear the bending of her brows
And long soft arrows flown from under them
As from bows bent. Desire flows out of her
As out of lips doth speech: and over her
Shines fire, and round her and beneath her fire.
She hath sown pain and plague in all our house,
Love loathed of love, and mates unmatchable,
Wild wedlock, and the lusts that bleat or low,

And marriage-fodder snuffed about of kine.
Lo how the heifer runs with leaping flank
Sleek under shaggy and speckled lies of hair,
And chews a horrible lip, and with harsh tongue
Laps alien froth and licks a loathlier mouth.
Alas, a foul first steam of trodden tares,
And fouler of these late grapes underfoot.
A bitter way of waves and clean-cut foam
Over the sad road of sonorous sea
The high gods gave king Theseus for no love,
Nay, but for love, yet to no loving end.
Alas the long thwarts and the fervent oars,
And blown hard sails that straightened the scant rope!
There were no strong pools in the hollow sea
To drag at them and suck down side and beak,
No wind to catch them in the teeth and hair,
No shoal, no shallow among the roaring reefs,
No gulf whereout the straining tides throw spars,
No surf where white bones twist like whirled white fire.
But like to death he came with death, and sought
And slew and spoiled and gat him that he would.
For death, for marriage, and for child-getting,
I set my curse against him as a sword;
Yea, and the severed half thereof I leave
Pittheus, because he slew not (when that face
Was tender, and the life still soft in it)
The small swathed child, but bred him for my fate.
I would I had been the first that took her death
Out from between wet hoofs and reddened teeth,
Splashed horns, fierce fetlocks of the brother bull!
For now shall I take death a deadlier way,
Gathering it up between the feet of love
Or off the knees of murder reaching it.

THE TRIUMPH OF TIME

Before our lives divide for ever,
While time is with us and hands are free,
(Time, swift to fasten and swift to sever
Hand from hand, as we stand by the sea)
I will say no word that a man might say
Whose whole life's love goes down in a day;
For this could never have been; and never,
Though the gods and the years relent, shall be.

Is it worth a tear, is it worth an hour,
To think of things that are well outworn?
Of fruitless husk and fugitive flower,
The dream foregone and the deed forborne?
Though joy be done with and grief be vain,
Time shall not sever us wholly in twain;
Earth is not spoilt for a single shower;
But the rain has ruined the ungrown corn.

It will grow not again, this fruit of my heart,
Smitten with sunbeams, ruined with rain.
The singing seasons divide and depart,
Winter and summer depart in twain.
It will grow not again, it is ruined at root,
The bloodlike blossom, the dull red fruit;
Though the heart yet sickens, the lips yet smart,
With sullen savour of poisonous pain.

I have given no man of my fruit to eat;
I trod the grapes, I have drunken the wine.
Had you eaten and drunken and found it sweet,
This wild new growth of the corn and vine,
This wine and bread without lees or leaven,
We had grown as gods, as the gods in heaven,
Souls fair to look upon, goodly to greet,
One splendid spirit, your soul and mine.

In the change of years, in the coil of things,
In the clamour and rumour of life to be,
We, drinking love at the furthest springs,
Covered with love as a covering tree,
We had grown as gods, as the gods above,
Filled from the heart to the lips with love,
Held fast in his hands, clothed warm with his wings,
O love, my love, had you loved but me!

We had stood as the sure stars stand, and moved
As the moon moves, loving the world; and seen
Grief collapse as a thing disproved,
Death consume as a thing unclean.
Twain halves of a perfect heart, made fast
Soul to soul while the years fell past;
Had you loved me once, as you have not loved;
Had the chance been with us that has not been.

I have put my days and dreams out of mind,
Days that are over, dreams that are done.
Though we seek life through, we shall surely find
There is none of them clear to us now, not one.
But clear are these things; the grass and the sand,
Where, sure as the eyes reach, ever at hand,
With lips wide open and face burnt blind,
The strong sea-daisies feast on the sun.

The low downs lean to the sea ; the stream,
One loose thin pulseless tremulous vein,
Rapid and vivid and dumb as a dream,
Works downward, sick of the sun and the rain ;
No wind is rough with the rank rare flowers ;
The sweet sea, mother of loves and hours,
Shudders and shines as the grey winds gleam,
Turning her smile to a fugitive pain.

Mother of loves that are swift to fade,
Mother of mutable winds and hours.
A barren mother, a mother-maid,
Cold and clean as her faint salt flowers.
I would we twain were even as she,
Lost in the night and the light of the sea,
Where faint sounds falter and wan beams wade,
Break, and are broken, and shed into showers.

The loves and hours of the life of a man,
They are swift and sad, being born of the sea.
Hours that rejoice and regret for a span,
Born with a man's breath, mortal as he ;
Loves that are lost ere they come to birth,
Weeds of the wave, without fruit upon earth.
I lose what I long for, save what I can,
My love, my love, and no love for me !

It is not much that a man can save
On the sands of life, in the straits of time,
Who swims in sight of the great third wave
That never a swimmer shall cross or climb.
Some waif washed up with the strays and spars
That ebb-tide shows to the shore and the stars ;
Weed from the water, grass from a grave,
A broken blossom, a ruined rhyme.

There will no man do for your sake, I think,
What I would have done for the least word said.
I had wrung life dry for your lips to drink,
Broken it up for your daily bread:
Body for body and blood for blood,
As the flow of the full sea risen to flood
That yearns and trembles before it sink,
I had given, and lain down for you, glad and dead.

Yea, hope at highest and all her fruit,
And time at fullest and all his dower,
I had given you surely, and life to boot,
Were we once made one for a single hour.
But now, you are twain, you are cloven apart,
Flesh of his flesh, but heart of my heart;
And deep in one is the bitter root,
And sweet for one is the lifelong flower.

To have died if you cared I should die for you, clung
To my life if you bade me, played my part
As it pleased you—these were the thoughts that stung,
The dreams that smote with a keener dart
Than shafts of love or arrows of death;
These were but as fire is, dust, or breath,
Or poisonous foam on the tender tongue
Of the little snakes that eat my heart.

I wish we were dead together to-day,
Lost sight of, hidden away out of sight,
Clasped and clothed in the cloven clay,
Out of the world's way, out of the light,
Out of the ages of worldly weather,
Forgotten of all men altogether.

As the world's first dead, taken wholly away,
Made one with death, filled full of the night.

How we should slumber, how we should sleep,
Far in the dark with the dreams and the dews!
And dreaming, grow to each other, and weep,
Laugh low, live softly, murmur and muse;
Yea, and it may be, struck through by the dream,
Feel the dust quicken and quiver, and seem
Alive as of old to the lips, and leap
Spirit to spirit as lovers use.

Sick dreams and sad of a dull delight;
For what shall it profit when men are dead
To have dreamed, to have loved with the whole soul's might,
To have looked for day when the day was fled?
Let come what will, there is one thing worth,
To have had fair love in the life upon earth:
To have held love safe till the day grew night,
While skies had colour and lips were red.

Would I lose you now? would I take you then,
If I lose you now that my heart has need?
And come what may after death to men,
What thing worth this will the dead years breed?
Lose life, lose all; but at least I know,
O sweet life's love, having loved you so,
Had I reached you on earth, I should lose not again,
In death nor life, nor in dream or deed.

Yea, I know this well: were you once sealed mine,
Mine in the blood's beat, mine in the breath,
Mixed into me as honey in wine,
Not time, that sayeth and gainsayeth,

Nor all strong things had severed us then ;
Not wrath of gods, nor wisdom of men,
Nor all things earthly, nor all divine,
Nor joy nor sorrow, nor life nor death.

I had grown pure as the dawn and the dew,
You had grown strong as the sun or the sea.
But none shall triumph a whole life through :
For death is one, and the fates are three.
At the door of life, by the gate of breath,
There are worse things waiting for men than death ;
Death could not sever my soul and you,
As these have severed your soul from me.

You have chosen and clung to the chance they sent you,
Life sweet as perfume and pure as prayer.
But will it not one day in heaven repent you ?
Will they solace you wholly, the days that were ?
Will you lift up your eyes between sadness and bliss,
Meet mine, and see where the great love is,
And tremble and turn and be changed ? Content you ;
The gate is strait ; I shall not be there.

But you, had you chosen, had you stretched hand,
Had you seen good such a thing were done,
I too might have stood with the souls that stand
In the sun's sight, clothed with the light of the sun ;
But who now on earth need care how I live ?
Have the high gods anything left to give,
Save dust and laurels and gold and sand ?
Which gifts are goodly ; but I will none.

O all fair lovers about the world,
There is none of you, none, that shall comfort me.
My thoughts are as dead things, wrecked and whirled
Round and round in a gulf of the sea;
And still, through the sound and the straining stream,
Through the coil and chafe, they gleam in a dream,
The bright fine lips so cruelly curled,
And strange swift eyes where the soul sits free.

Free, without pity, withheld from woe,
Ignorant; fair as the eyes are fair.
Would I have you change now, change at a blow
Startled and stricken, awake and aware?
Yea, if I could, would I have you see
My very love of you filling me,
And know my soul to the quick, as I know
The likeness and look of your throat and hair?

I shall not change you. Nay, though I might,
Would I change my sweet one love with a word?
I had rather your hair should change in a night,
Clear now as the plume of a black bright bird;
Your face fail suddenly, cease, turn grey,
Die as a leaf that dies in a day.
I will keep my soul in a place out of sight,
Far off, where the pulse of it is not heard.

Far off it walks, in a bleak blown space,
Full of the sound of the sorrow of years.
I have woven a veil for the weeping face,
Whose lips have drunken the wine of tears;
I have found a way for the failing feet,
A place for slumber and sorrow to meet;
There is no rumour about the place,
Nor light, nor any that sees or hears.

I have hidden my soul out of sight, and said
" Let none take pity upon thee, none
Comfort thy crying : for lo, thou art dead,
Lie still now, safe out of sight of the sun.
Have I not built thee a grave, and wrought
Thy grave-clothes on thee of grievous thought,
With soft spun verses and tears unshed,
And sweet light visions of things undone ?

" I have given thee garments and balm and myrrh,
And gold, and beautiful burial things.
But thou, be at peace now, make no stir ;
Is not thy grave as a royal king's ?
Fret not thyself though the end were sore ;
Sleep, be patient, vex me no more.
Sleep ; what hast thou to do with her ?
The eyes that weep, with the mouth that sings ? "

Where the dead red leaves of the years lie rotten,
The cold old crimes and the deeds thrown by,
The misconceived and the misbegotten,
I would find a sin to do ere I die,
Sure to dissolve and destroy me all through,
That would set you higher in heaven, serve you
And leave you happy, when clean forgotten,
As a dead man out of mind, am I.

Your lithe hands draw me, your face burns through me,
I am swift to follow you, keen to see ;
But love lacks might to redeem or undo me ;
As I have been, I know I shall surely be ;
" What should such fellows as I do ? " Nay,
My part were worse if I chose to play ;

For the worst is this after all ; if they knew me,
Not a soul upon earth would pity me.

And I play not for pity of these ; but you,
If you saw with your soul what man am I,
You would praise me at least that my soul all through
Clove to you, loathing the lives that lie ;
The souls and lips that are bought and sold,
The smiles of silver and kisses of gold,
The lapdog loves that whine as they chew,
The little lovers that curse and cry.

There are fairer women, I hear ; that may be ;
But I, that I love you and find you fair,
Who are more than fair in my eyes if they be,
Do the high gods know or the great gods care ?
Though the swords in my heart for one were seven,
Should the iron hollow of doubtful heaven,
That knows not itself whether night-time or day be,
Reverberate words and a foolish prayer ?

I will go back to the great sweet mother,
Mother and lover of men, the sea.
I will go down to her, I and none other,
Close with her, kiss her and mix her with me ;
Cling to her, strive with her, hold her fast :
O fair white mother, in days long past
Born without sister, born without brother,
Set free my soul as thy soul is free.

O fair green-girdled mother of mine,
Sea, that art clothed with the sun and the rain,
Thy sweet hard kisses are strong like wine,
Thy large embraces are keen like pain.

Save me and hide me with all thy waves,
Find me one grave of thy thousand graves,
Those pure cold populous graves of thine
Wrought without hand in a world without stain.

I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,
Change as the winds change, veer in the tide;
My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,
I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside;
Sleep, and not know if she be, if she were,
Filled full with life to the eyes and hair,
As a rose is fulfilled to the roseleaf tips
With splendid summer and perfume and pride.

This woven raiment of nights and days,
Were it once cast off and unwound from me,
Naked and glad would I walk in thy ways,
Alive and aware of thy ways and thee;
Clear of the whole world, hidden at home,
Clothed with the green and crowned with the foam,
A pulse of the life of thy straits and bays,
A vein in the heart of the streams of the sea.

Fair mother, fed with the lives of men,
Thou art subtle and cruel of heart, men say.
Thou hast taken, and shalt not render again;
Thou art full of thy dead, and cold as they.
But death is the worst that comes of thee;
Thou art fed with our dead, O mother, O sea,
But when hast thou fed on our hearts? or when,
Having given us love, hast thou taken away?

O tender-hearted, O perfect lover,
Thy lips are bitter, and sweet thine heart.

The hopes that hurt and the dreams that hover,
  Shall they not vanish away and apart?
But thou, thou art sure, thou art older than earth;
Thou art strong for death and fruitful of birth;
Thy depths conceal and thy gulfs discover;
  From the first thou wert; in the end thou art.

And grief shall endure not for ever, I know.
  As things that are not shall these things be;
We shall live through seasons of sun and of snow,
  And none be grievous as this to me.
We shall hear, as one in a trance that hears,
The sound of time, the rhyme of the years;
Wrecked hope and passionate pain will grow
  As tender things of a spring-tide sea.

Sea-fruit that swings in the waves that hiss,
  Drowned gold and purple and royal rings.
And all time past, was it all for this?
  Times unforgotten, and treasures of things?
Swift years of liking and sweet long laughter,
That wist not well of the years thereafter
Till love woke, smitten at heart by a kiss,
  With lips that trembled and trailing wings?

There lived a singer in France of old
  By the tideless dolorous midland sea.
In a land of sand and ruin and gold
  There shone one woman, and none but she.
And finding life for her love's sake fail,
Being fain to see her, he bade set sail,
Touched land, and saw her as life grew cold,
  And praised God, seeing; and so died he.

Died, praising God for his gift and grace :
For she bowed down to him weeping, and said
" Live ; " and her tears were shed on his face
Or ever the life in his face was shed.
The sharp tears fell through her hair, and stung
Once, and her close lips touched him and clung
Once, and grew one with his lips for a space ;
And so drew back, and the man was dead.

O brother, the gods were good to you.
Sleep, and be glad while the world endures.
Be well content as the years wear through ;
Give thanks for life, and the loves and lures ;
Give thanks for life, O brother, and death,
For the sweet last sound of her feet, her breath,
For gifts she gave you, gracious and few,
Tears and kisses, that lady of yours.

Rest, and be glad of the gods ; but I,
How shall I praise them, or how take rest ?
There is not room under all the sky
For me that know not of worst or best,
Dream or desire of the days before,
Sweet things or bitterness, any more.
Love will not come to me now though I die,
As love came close to you, breast to breast.

I shall never be friends again with roses ;
I shall loathe sweet tunes, where a note grown strong
Relents and recoils, and climbs and closes,
As a wave of the sea turned back by song.
There are sounds where the soul's delight takes fire,
Face to face with its own desire ;

A delight that rebels, a desire that reposes ;
I shall hate sweet music my whole life long.

The pulse of war and passion of wonder,
The heavens that murmur, the sounds that shine,
The stars that sing and the loves that thunder,
The music burning at heart like wine,
An armed archangel whose hands raise up
All senses mixed in the spirit's cup
Till flesh and spirit are molten in sunder—
These things are over, and no more mine.

These were a part of the playing I heard
Once, ere my love and my heart were at strife ;
Love that sings and hath wings as a bird,
Balm of the wound and heft of the knife.
Fairer than earth is the sea, and sleep
Than overwatching of eyes that weep,
Now time has done with his one sweet word,
The wine and leaven of lovely life.

I shall go my ways, tread out my measure,
Fill the days of my daily breath
With fugitive things not good to treasure,
Do as the world doth, say as it saith ;
But if we had loved each other—O sweet,
Had you felt, lying under the palms of your feet,
The heart of my heart, beating harder with pleasure
To feel you tread it to dust and death—

Ah, had I not taken my life up and given
All that life gives and the years let go,
The wine and honey, the balm and leaven,
The dreams reared high and the hopes brought low ?

Come life, come death, not a word be said ;
Should I lose you living, and vex you dead ?
I never shall tell you on earth ; and in heaven,
If I cry to you then, will you hear or know ?

LES NOYADES

WHATEVER a man of the sons of men
Shall say to his heart of the lords above,
They have shown man verily, once and again,
Marvellous mercies and infinite love.

In the wild fifth year of the change of things,
When France was glorious and blood-red, fair
With dust of battle and deaths of kings,
A queen of men, with helmeted hair,

Carrier came down to the Loire and slew,
Till all the ways and the waves waxed red :
Bound and drowned, slaying two by two,
Maidens and young men, naked and wed.

They brought on a day to his judgment-place
One rough with labour and red with fight,
And a lady noble by name and face,
Faultless, a maiden, wonderful, white.

She knew not, being for shame's sake blind,
If his eyes were hot on her face hard by.
And the judge bade strip and ship them, and bind
Bosom to bosom, to drown and die.

The white girl winced and whitened ; but he
  Caught fire, waxed bright as a great bright flame
Seen with thunder far out on the sea,
  Laughed hard as the glad blood went and came.

Twice his lips quailed with delight, then said,
  " I have but a word to you all, one word ;
Bear with me ; surely I am but dead ; "
  And all they laughed and mocked him and heard.

" Judge, when they open the judgment-roll,
  I will stand upright before God and pray :
' Lord God, have mercy on one man's soul,
  For his mercy was great upon earth, I say.

" ' Lord, if I loved thee—Lord, if I served—
  If these who darkened thy fair Son's face
I fought with, sparing not one, nor swerved
  A hand's-breadth, Lord, in the perilous place—

" ' I pray thee say to this man, O Lord,
  Sit thou for him at my feet on a throne.
I will face thy wrath, though it bite as a sword,
  And my soul shall burn for his soul, and atone.

" ' For, Lord, thou knowest, O God most wise,
  How gracious on earth were his deeds towards me.
Shall this be a small thing in thine eyes,
  That is greater in mine than the whole great sea?

" I have loved this woman my whole life long,
  And even for love's sake when have I said
' I love you ' ? when have I done you wrong,
  Living? but now I shall have you dead.

"Yea, now, do I bid you love me, love?
Love me or loathe, we are one not twain.
But God be praised in his heaven above
For this my pleasure and that my pain!

"For never a man, being mean like me,
Shall die like me till the whole world dies.
I shall drown with her, laughing for love; and she
Mix with me, touching me, lips and eyes.

"Shall she not know me and see me all through,
Me, on whose heart as a worm she trod?
You have given me, God requite it you,
What man yet never was given of God."

O sweet one love, O my life's delight,
Dear, though the days have divided us,
Lost beyond hope, taken far out of sight,
Not twice in the world shall the gods do thus.

Had it been so hard for my love? but I,
Though the gods gave all that a god can give,
I had chosen rather the gift to die,
Cease, and be glad above all that live.

For the Loire would have driven us down to the sea,
And the sea would have pitched us from shoal to shoal;
And I should have held you, and you held me,
As flesh holds flesh, and the soul the soul.

Could I change you, help you to love me, sweet,
Could I give you the love that would sweeten death,

We should yield, go down, locked hands and feet,
Die, drown together, and breath catch breath ;

But you would have felt my soul in a kiss,
And known that once if I loved you well ;
And I would have given my soul for this
To burn for ever in burning hell.

A LEAVE-TAKING

Let us go hence, my songs ; she will not hear.
Let us go hence together without fear ;
Keep silence now, for singing-time is over,
And over all old things and all things dear.
She loves not you nor me as all we love her.
Yea, though we sang as angels in her ear,
She would not hear.

Let us rise up and part ; she will not know.
Let us go seaward as the great winds go,
Full of blown sand and foam ; what help is here?
There is no help, for all these things are so,
And all the world is bitter as a tear.
And how these things are, though ye strove to show,
She would not know.

Let us go home and hence ; she will not weep.
We gave love many dreams and days to keep,
Flowers without scent, and fruits that would not grow,
Saying 'If thou wilt, thrust in thy sickle and reap.'
All is reaped now ; no grass is left to mow ;
And we that sowed, though all we fell on sleep,
She would not weep.

Let us go hence and rest ; she will not love.
She shall not hear us if we sing hereof,
Nor see love's ways, how sore they are and steep.
Come hence, let be, lie still ; it is enough.
Love is a barren sea, bitter and deep ;
And though she saw all heaven in flower above,
She would not love.

Let us give up, go down ; she will not care.
Though all the stars made gold of all the air,
And the sea moving saw before it move
One moon-flower making all the foam-flowers fair ;
Though all those waves went over us, and drove
Deep down the stifling lips and drowning hair,
She would not care.

Let us go hence, go hence ; she will not see.
Sing all once more together ; surely she,
She too, remembering days and words that were,
Will turn a little toward us, sighing ; but we,
We are hence, we are gone, as though we had not been there.
Nay, and though all men seeing had pity on me,
She would not see.

ITYLUS

Swallow, my sister, O sister swallow,
How can thine heart be full of the spring?
A thousand summers are over and dead.
What hast thou found in the spring to follow?
What hast thou found in thine heart to sing?
What wilt thou do when the summer is shed?

O swallow, sister, O fair swift swallow,
Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,
The soft south whither thine heart is set?
Shall not the grief of the old time follow?
Shall not the song thereof cleave to thy mouth?
Hast thou forgotten ere I forget?

Sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow,
Thy way is long to the sun and the south;
But I, fulfilled of my heart's desire,
Shedding my song upon height, upon hollow,
From tawny body and sweet small mouth
Feed the heart of the night with fire.

I the nightingale all spring through,
O swallow, sister, O changing swallow,
All spring through till the spring be done,
Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,
Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,
Take flight and follow and find the sun.

Sister, my sister, O soft light swallow,
Though all things feast in the spring's guest-chamber,
How hast thou heart to be glad thereof yet?
For where thou fliest I shall not follow,
Till life forget and death remember.
Till thou remember and I forget.

Swallow, my sister, O singing swallow,
I know not how thou hast heart to sing.
Hast thou the heart? is it all past over?
Thy lord the summer is good to follow,
And fair the feet of thy lover the spring:
But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover?

O swallow, sister, O fleeting swallow,
My heart in me is a molten ember
And over my head the waves have met.
But thou wouldst tarry or I would follow,
Could I forget or thou remember,
Couldst thou remember and I forget.

O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow,
The heart's division divideth us.
Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree;
But mine goes forth among sea-gulfs hollow
To the place of the slaying of Itylus,
The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

O swallow, sister, O rapid swallow,
I pray thee sing not a little space.
Are not the roofs and the lintels wet?
The woven web that was plain to follow,
The small slain body, the flowerlike face,
Can I remember if thou forget?

O sister, sister, thy first-begotten !
The hands that cling and the feet that follow,
The voice of the child's blood crying yet
Who hath remembered me ? who hath forgotten ?
Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,
But the world shall end when I forget.

ANACTORIA

τίνος αὖ τὺ πειθοῖ
μὰψ σαγηνεύσας φιλότατα ;
SAPPHO.

My life is bitter with thy love ; thine eyes
Blind me, thy tresses burn me, thy sharp sighs
Divide my flesh and spirit with soft sound,
And my blood strengthens, and my veins abound.
I pray thee sigh not, speak not, draw not breath ;
Let life burn down, and dream it is not death.
I would the sea had hidden us, the fire
(Wilt thou fear that, and fear not my desire ?)
Severed the bones that bleach, the flesh that cleaves,
And let our sifted ashes drop like leaves.
I feel thy blood against my blood : my pain
Pains thee, and lips bruise lips, and vein stings vein.
Let fruit be crushed on fruit, let flower on flower,
Breast kindle breast, and either burn one hour.
Why wilt thou follow lesser loves ? are thine
Too weak to bear these hands and lips of mine ?
I charge thee for my life's sake, O too sweet
To crush love with thy cruel faultless feet,
I charge thee keep thy lips from hers or his,
Sweetest, till theirs be sweeter than my kiss :
Lest I too lure, a swallow for a dove,
Erotion or Erinna to my love.

I would my love could kill thee ; I am satiated
With seeing thee live, and fain would have thee dead.
I would earth had thy body as fruit to eat,
And no mouth but some serpent's found thee sweet.
I would find grievous ways to have thee slain,
Intense device, and superflux of pain ;
Vex thee with amorous agonies, and shake
Life at thy lips, and leave it there to ache ;
Strain out thy soul with pangs too soft to kill,
Intolerable interludes, and infinite ill ;
Relapse and reluctation of the breath,
Dumb tunes and shuddering semitones of death.
I am weary of all thy words and soft strange ways,
Of all love's fiery nights and all his days,
And all the broken kisses salt as brine
That shuddering lips make moist with waterish wine,
And eyes the bluer for all those hidden hours
That pleasure fills with tears and feeds from flowers,
Fierce at the heart with fire that half comes through,
But all the flowerlike white stained round with blue ;
The fervent underlid, and that above
Lifted with laughter or abashed with love ;
Thine amorous girdle, full of thee and fair,
And leavings of the lilies in thine hair.
Yea, all sweet words of thine and all thy ways,
And all the fruit of nights and flower of days,
And stinging lips wherein the hot sweet brine
That Love was born of burns and foams like wine,
And eyes insatiable of amorous hours,
Fervent as fire and delicate as flowers,
Coloured like night at heart, but cloven through
Like night with flame, dyed round like night with
blue,

Clothed with deep eyelids under and above—
Yea, all thy beauty sickens me with love ;
Thy girdle empty of thee and now not fair,
And ruinous lilies in thy languid hair.
Ah, take no thought for Love's sake ; shall this be,
And she who loves thy lover not love thee ?
Sweet soul, sweet mouth of all that laughs and lives,
Mine is she, very mine ; and she forgives.
For I beheld in sleep the light that is
In her high place in Paphos, heard the kiss
Of body and soul that mix with eager tears
And laughter stinging through the eyes and ears ,
Saw Love, as burning flame from crown to feet,
Imperishable, upon her storied seat ;
Clear eyelids lifted toward the north and south,
A mind of many colours, and a mouth
Of many tunes and kisses ; and she bowed,
With all her subtle face laughing aloud,
Bowed down upon me, saying, " Who doth thee wrong,
Sappho ? " but thou—thy body is the song,
Thy mouth the music ; thou art more than I,
Though my voice die not till the whole world die ;
Though men that hear it madden ; though love weep,
Though nature change, though shame be charmed to sleep.
Ah, wilt thou slay me lest I kiss thee dead ?
Yet the queen laughed from her sweet heart and said :
" Even she that flies shall follow for thy sake,
And she shall give thee gifts that would not take,
Shall kiss that would not kiss thee " (yea, kiss me)
" When thou wouldst not "—when I would not kiss thee !

Ah, more to me than all men as thou art,
Shall not my songs assuage her at the heart?
Ah, sweet to me as life seems sweet to death,
Why should her wrath fill thee with fearful breath?
Nay, sweet, for is she God alone? hath she
Made earth and all the centuries of the sea,
Taught the sun ways to travel, woven most fine
The moonbeams, shed the starbeams forth as wine,
Bound with her myrtles, beaten with her rods,
The young men and the maidens and the gods?
Have we not lips to love with, eyes for tears,
And summer and flower of women and of years?
Stars for the foot of morning, and for noon
Sunlight, and exaltation of the moon;
Waters that answer waters, fields that wear
Lilies, and languor of the Lesbian air?
Beyond those flying feet of fluttered doves,
Are there not other gods for other loves?
Yea, though she scourge thee, sweetest, for my sake,
Blossom not thorns and flowers not blood should break.
Ah that my lips were tuneless lips, but pressed
To the bruised blossom of thy scourged white breast!
Ah that my mouth for Muses' milk were fed
On the sweet blood thy sweet small wounds had bled!
That with my tongue I felt them, and could taste
The faint flakes from thy bosom to the waist!
That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat
Thy breasts like honey! that from face to feet
Thy body were abolished and consumed,
And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!

Ah, ah, thy beauty ! like a beast it bites,
Stings like an adder, like an arrow smites.
Ah sweet, and sweet again, and seven times sweet,
The paces and the pauses of thy feet !
Ah sweeter than all sleep or summer air
The fallen fillets fragrant from thine hair !
Yea, though their alien kisses do me wrong,
Sweeter thy lips than mine with all their song ;
Thy shoulders whiter than a fleece of white,
And flower-sweet fingers, good to bruise or bite
As honeycomb of the inmost honey-cells,
With almond-shaped and roseleaf-coloured shells
And blood like purple blossom at the tips
Quivering ; and pain made perfect in thy lips
For my sake when I hurt thee ; O that I
Durst crush thee out of life with love, and die,
Die of thy pain and my delight, and be
Mixed with thy blood and molten into thee !
Would I not plague thee dying overmuch ?
Would I not hurt thee perfectly ? not touch
Thy pores of sense with torture, and make bright
Thine eyes with bloodlike tears and grievous light ?
Strike pang from pang as note is struck from note
Catch the sob's middle music in thy throat,
Take thy limbs living, and new-mould with these
A lyre of many faultless agonies ?
Feed thee with fever and famine and fine drouth,
With perfect pangs convulse thy perfect mouth,
Make thy life shudder in thee and burn afresh,
And wring thy very spirit through the flesh ?
Cruel ? but love makes all that love him well
As wise as heaven and crueller than hell.
Me hath love made more bitter toward thee
Than death toward man ; but were I made as he

Who hath made all things to break them one by one,
If my feet trod upon the stars and sun
And souls of men as his have alway trod,
God knows I might be crueller than God.
For who shall change with prayers or thanksgivings
The mystery of the cruelty of things?
Or say what God above all gods and years
With offering and blood-sacrifice of tears,
With lamentation from strange lands, from graves
Where the snake pastures, from scarred mouths of slaves,
From prison, and from plunging prows of ships
Through flamelike foam of the sea's closing lips—
With thwartings of strange signs, and wind-blown hair
Of comets, desolating the dim air,
When darkness is made fast with seals and bars,
And fierce reluctance of disastrous stars,
Eclipse, and sound of shaken hills, and wings
Darkening, and blind inexpiable things—
With sorrow of labouring moons, and altering light
And travail of the planets of the night,
And weeping of the weary Pleiads seven,
Feeds the mute melancholy lust of heaven?
Is not his incense bitterness, his meat
Murder? his hidden face and iron feet
Hath not man known, and felt them on their way
Threaten and trample all things and every day?
Hath he not sent us hunger? who hath cursed
Spirit and flesh with longing? filled with thirst
Their lips who cried unto him? who bade exceed
The fervid will, fall short the feeble deed,
Bade sink the spirit and the flesh aspire,
Pain animate the dust of dead desire,

And life yield up her flower to violent fate?
Him would I reach, him smite, him desecrate,
Pierce the cold lips of God with human breath,
And mix his immortality with death.
Why hath he made us? what had all we done
That we should live and loathe the sterile sun,
And with the moon wax paler as she wanes,
And pulse by pulse feel time grow through our veins?
Thee too the years shall cover; thou shalt be
As the rose born of one same blood with thee,
As a song sung, as a word said, and fall
Flower-wise, and be not any more at all,
Nor any memory of thee anywhere;
For never Muse has bound above thine hair
The high Pierian flower whose graft outgrows
All summer kinship of the mortal rose
And colour of deciduous days, nor shed
Reflex and flush of heaven about thine head,
Nor reddened brows made pale by floral grief
With splendid shadow from that lordlier leaf.
Yea, thou shalt be forgotten like spilt wine,
Except these kisses of my lips on thine
Brand them with immortality; but me—
Men shall not see bright fire nor hear the sea,
Nor mix their hearts with music, nor behold
Cast forth of heaven, with feet of awful gold
And plumeless wings that make the bright air blind,
Lightning, with thunder for a hound behind
Hunting through fields unfurrowed and unsown,
But in the light and laughter, in the moan
And music, and in grasp of lip and hand
And shudder of water that makes felt on land

The immeasurable tremor of all the sea,
Memories shall mix and metaphors of me.
Like me shall be the shuddering calm of night,
When all the winds of the world for pure delight
Close lips that quiver and fold up wings that ache;
When nightingales are louder for love's sake,
And leaves tremble like lute-strings or like fire;
Like me the one star swooning with desire
Even at the cold lips of the sleepless moon,
As I at thine; like me the waste white noon,
Burnt through with barren sunlight; and like me
The land-stream and the tide-stream in the sea.
I am sick with time as these with ebb and flow,
And by the yearning in my veins I know
The yearning sound of waters; and mine eyes
Burn as that beamless fire which fills the skies
With troubled stars and travailing things of flame;
And in my heart the grief consuming them
Labours, and in my veins the thirst of these,
And all the summer travail of the trees
And all the winter sickness; and the earth,
Filled full with deadly works of death and birth,
Sore spent with hungry lusts of birth and death,
Has pain like mine in her divided breath;
Her spring of leaves is barren, and her fruit
Ashes; her boughs are burdened, and her root
Fibrous and gnarled with poison; underneath
Serpents have gnawn it through with tortuous teeth
Made sharp upon the bones of all the dead,
And wild birds rend her branches overhead.
These, woven as raiment for his word and thought,
These hath God made, and me as these, and wrought
Song, and hath lit it at my lips; and me
Earth shall not gather though she feed on thee.

As a shed tear shalt thou be shed ; but I—
Lo, earth may labour, men live long and die,
Years change and stars, and the high God devise
New things, and old things wane before his eyes
Who wields and wrecks them, being more strong
than they—
But, having made me, me he shall not slay.
Nor slay nor satiate, like those herds of his
Who laugh and live a little, and their kiss
Contents them, and their loves are swift and sweet,
And sure death grasps and gains them with slow
feet,
Love they or hate they, strive or bow their knees—
And all these end ; he hath his will of these.
Yea, but albeit he slay me, hating me—
Albeit he hide me in the deep dear sea
And cover me with cool wan foam, and ease
This soul of mine as any soul of these,
And give me water and great sweet waves, and make
The very sea's name lordlier for my sake,
The whole sea sweeter—albeit I die indeed
And hide myself and sleep and no man heed,
Of me the high God hath not all his will.
Blossom of branches, and on each high hill
Clear air and wind, and under in clamorous vales
Fierce noises of the fiery nightingales,
Buds burning in the sudden spring like fire,
The wan washed sand and the waves' vain desire,
Sails seen like blown white flowers at sea, and words
That bring tears swiftest, and long notes of birds
Violently singing till the whole world sings—
I Sappho shall be one with all these things,
With all high things for ever ; and my face
Seen once, my songs once heard in a strange place,

Cleave to men's lives, and waste the days thereof
With gladness and much sadness and long love.
Yea, they shall say, earth's womb has borne in vain
New things, and never this best thing again ;
Borne days and men, borne fruits and wars and wine,
Seasons and songs, but no song more like mine.
And they shall know me as ye who have known me here,
Last year when I loved Atthis, and this year
When I love thee ; and they shall praise me, and say
"She hath all time as all we have our day,
Shall she not live and have her will"—even I ?
Yea, though thou diest, I say I shall not die.
For these shall give me of their souls, shall give
Life, and the days and loves wherewith I live,
Shall quicken me with loving, fill with breath,
Save me and serve me, strive for me with death.
Alas, that neither moon nor snow nor dew
Nor all cold things can purge me wholly through,
Assuage me nor allay me nor appease,
Till supreme sleep shall bring me bloodless ease ;
Till time wax faint in all his periods ;
Till fate undo the bondage of the gods,
And lay, to slake and satiate me all through,
Lotus and Lethe on my lips like dew,
And shed around and over and under me
Thick darkness and the insuperable sea

HYMN TO PROSERPINE

(AFTER THE PROCLAMATION IN ROME OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH)

Vicisti, Galilæe.

I HAVE lived long enough, having seen one thing,
that love hath an end ;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now
and befriend.
Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the
seasons that laugh or that weep ;
For these give joy and sorrow ; but thou, Proserpina,
sleep.
Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the feet of
the dove ;
But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes
or love.
Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harpstring of
gold,
A bitter God to follow, a beautiful God to behold ?
I am sick of singing : the bays burn deep and chafe :
I am fain
To rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure
and pain.
For the Gods we know not of, who give us our daily
breath,
We know they are cruel as love or life, and lovely as
death.

O Gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped out in a day !
From your wrath is the world released, redeemed from your chains, men say.
New Gods are crowned in the city ; their flowers have broken your rods ;
They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young compassionate Gods.
But for me their new device is barren, the days are bare ;
Things long past over suffice, and men forgotten that were.
Time and the Gods are at strife ; ye dwell in the midst thereof,
Draining a little life from the barren breasts of love.
I say to you, cease, take rest ; yea, I say to you all, be at peace,
Till the bitter milk of her breast and the barren bosom shall cease.
Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean ? but these thou shalt not take,
The laurel, the palms and the pæan, the breasts of the nymphs in the brake ;
Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer breath ;
And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before death ;
All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre,
Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings that flicker like fire.
More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all these things ?
Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.

A little while and we die; shall life not thrive as it may?
For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.
And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his tears:
Why should he labour, and bring fresh grief to blacken his years?
Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath;
We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fullness of death.
Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day;
But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives not May.
Sleep, shall we sleep after all? for the world is not sweet in the end;
For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin and rend.
Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul is a rock that abides;
But her ears are vexed with the roar and her face with the foam of the tides.
O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and rods!
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods!
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees bend,
I kneel not neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.
All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast
Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf of the past:

Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between
the remote sea-gates,
Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and
deep death waits :
Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about
with the seas as with wings,
And impelled of invisible tides, and fulfilled of un-
speakable things,
White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed and
serpentine-curled,
Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the
wave of the world.
The depths stand naked in sunder behind it, the
storms flee away ;
In the hollow before it the thunder is taken and
snared as a prey ;
In its sides is the north-wind bound ; and its salt is
of all men's tears ;
With light of ruin, and sound of changes, and pulse
of years :
With travail of day after day, and with trouble of
hour upon hour ;
And bitter as blood is the spray ; and the crests are
as fangs that devour :
And its vapour and storm of its steam as the sighing
of spirits to be ;
And its noise as the noise in a dream ; and its depth
as the roots of the sea :
And the height of its heads as the height of the
utmost stars of the air :
And the ends of the earth at the might thereof
tremble, and time is made bare.
Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins, will ye chasten
the high sea with rods ?

Will ye take her to chain her with chains, who is
older than all ye Gods?
All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye pass
and be past;
Ye are Gods, and behold, ye shall die, and the waves
be upon you at last.
In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years, in
the changes of things,
Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world
shall forget you for kings.
Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy
lords and our forefathers trod,
Though these that were Gods are dead, and thou
being dead art a God,
Though before thee the throned Cytherean be fallen,
and hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall
go down to thee dead.
Of the maiden thy mother men sing as a goddess
with grace clad around;
Thou art throned where another was king; where
another was queen she is crowned.
Yea, once we had sight of another: but now she is
queen, say these.
Not as thine, not as thine was our mother, a blossom
of flowering seas,
Clothed round with the world's desire as with raiment,
and fair as the foam,
And fleeter than kindled fire, and a goddess, and
mother of Rome.
For thine came pale and a maiden, and sister to
sorrow; but ours,
Her deep hair heavily laden with odour and colour
of flowers,

White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendour, a flame,
Bent down unto us that besought her, and earth grew sweet with her name.
For thine came weeping, a slave among slaves, and rejected ; but she
Came flushed from the full-flushed wave, and imperial, her foot on the sea.
And the wonderful waters knew her, the winds and the viewless ways,
And the roses grew rosier, and bluer the sea-blue stream of the bays.
Ye are fallen, our lords, by what token? we wist that ye should not fall.
Ye were all so fair that are broken ; and one more fair than ye all.
But I turn to her still, having seen she shall surely abide in the end ;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
O daughter of earth, of my mother, her crown and blossom of birth,
I am also, I also, thy brother ; I go as I came unto earth.
In the night where thine eyes are as moons are in heaven, the night where thou art,
Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep overflows from the heart,
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the red rose is white,
And the wind falls faint as it blows with the fume of the flowers of the night,
And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of Gods from afar

Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim
soul of a star,
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens
untrod by the sun,
Let my soul with their souls find place, and forget
what is done and undone.
Thou art more than the Gods who number the days
of our temporal breath ;
For these give labour and slumber ; but thou,
Proserpina, death.
Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a season in
silence. I know
I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as they
sleep ; even so.
For the glass of the years is brittle wherein we gaze
for a span ;
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is
man.[1]
So long I endure, no longer ; and laugh not again,
neither weep.
For there is no God found stronger than death ; and
death is a sleep.

[1] ψυχάριον εἶ βαστάζον νεκρόν.
EPICTETUS.

ILICET

There is an end of joy and sorrow ;
Peace all day long, all night, all morrow,
  But never a time to laugh or weep.
The end is come of pleasant places,
The end of tender words and faces,
  The end of all, the poppied sleep.

No place for sound within their hearing,
No room to hope, no time for fearing,
  No lips to laugh, no lids for tears.
The old years have run out all their measure ;
No chance of pain, no chance of pleasure,
  No fragment of the broken years.

Outside of all the worlds and ages,
There where the fool is as the sage is,
  There where the slayer is clean of blood,
No end, no passage, no beginning,
There where the sinner leaves off sinning,
  There where the good man is not good.

There is not one thing with another,
But Evil saith to Good : My brother,
  My brother, I am one with thee :
They shall not strive nor cry for ever :
No man shall choose between them : never
  Shall this thing end and that thing be.

Wind wherein seas and stars are shaken
Shall shake them, and they shall not waken ;
  None that has lain down shall arise ;
The stones are sealed across their places ;
One shadow is shed on all their faces,
  One blindness cast on all their eyes.

Sleep, is it sleep perchance that covers
Each face, as each face were his lover's ?
  Farewell ; as men that sleep fare well.
The grave's mouth laughs unto derision
Desire and dread and dream and vision,
  Delight of heaven and sorrow of hell.

No soul shall tell nor lip shall number
The names and tribes of you that slumber ;
  No memory, no memorial.
"Thou knowest"—who shall say thou knowest ?
There is none highest and none lowest :
  An end, an end, an end of all.

Good night, good sleep, good rest from sorrow
To these that shall not have good morrow ;
  The gods be gentle to all these.
Nay, if death be not, how shall they be ?
Nay, is there help in heaven ? it may be
  All things and lords of things shall cease.

The stooped urn, filling, dips and flashes ;
The bronzèd brims are deep in ashes ;
  The pale old lips of death are fed.
Shall this dust gather flesh hereafter ?
Shall one shed tears or fall to laughter,
  At sight of all these poor old dead ?

Nay, as thou wilt ; these know not of it ;
Thine eyes' strong weeping shall not profit,
  Thy laughter shall not give thee ease ;
Cry aloud, spare not, cease not crying,
Sigh, till thou cleave thy sides with sighing,
  Thou shalt not raise up one of these.

Burnt spices flash, and burnt wine hisses,
The breathing flame's mouth curls and kisses
  The small dried rows of frankincense ;
All round the sad red blossoms smoulder,
Flowers coloured like the fire, but colder,
  In sign of sweet things taken hence ;

Yea, for their sake and in death's favour
Things of sweet shape and of sweet savour
  We yield them, spice and flower and wine ;
Yea, costlier things than wine or spices,
Whereof none knoweth how great the price is,
  And fruit that comes not of the vine.

From boy's pierced throat and girl's pierced bosom
Drips, reddening round the blood-red blossom,
  The slow delicious bright soft blood,
Bathing the spices and the pyre,
Bathing the flowers and fallen fire,
  Bathing the blossom by the bud.

Roses whose lips the flame has deadened
Drink till the lapping leaves are reddened
  And warm wet inner petals weep ;
The flower whereof sick sleep gets leisure,
Barren of balm and purple pleasure,
  Fumes with no native steam of sleep.

Why will ye weep? what do ye weeping?
For waking folk and people sleeping,
And sands that fill and sands that fall,
The days rose-red, the poppied hours,
Blood, wine, and spice and fire and flowers,
There is one end of one and all.

Shall such an one lend love or borrow?
Shall these be sorry for thy sorrow?
Shall these give thanks for words or breath?
Their hate is as their loving-kindness;
The frontlet of their brows is blindness,
The armlet of their arms is death.

Lo, for no noise or light of thunder
Shall these grave-clothes be rent in sunder;
He that hath taken, shall he give?
He hath rent them: shall he bind together?
He hath bound them: shall he break the tether?
He hath slain them: shall he bid them live?

A little sorrow, a little pleasure,
Fate metes us from the dusty measure
That holds the date of all of us;
We are born with travail and strong crying,
And from the birth-day to the dying
The likeness of our life is thus.

One girds himself to serve another,
Whose father was the dust, whose mother
The little dead red worm therein;
They find no fruit of things they cherish;
The goodness of a man shall perish,
It shall be one thing with his sin.

In deep wet ways by grey old gardens
Fed with sharp spring the sweet fruit hardens ;
  They know not what fruits wane or grow ;
Red summer burns to the utmost ember ;
They know not, neither can remember,
  The old years and flowers they used to know.

Ah, for their sakes, so trapped and taken,
For theirs, forgotten and forsaken,
  Watch, sleep not, gird thyself with prayer.
Nay, where the heart of wrath is broken,
Where long love ends as a thing spoken,
  How shall thy crying enter there ?

Though the iron sides of the old world falter,
The likeness of them shall not alter
  For all the rumour of periods,
The stars and seasons that come after,
The tears of latter men, the laughter
  Of the old unalterable gods.

Far up above the years and nations,
The high gods, clothed and crowned with patience,
  Endure through days of deathlike date ;
They bear the witness of things hidden ;
Before their eyes all life stands chidden,
  As they before the eyes of Fate.

Not for their love shall Fate retire,
Nor they relent for our desire,
  Nor the graves open for their call.
The end is more than joy and anguish,
Than lives that laugh and lives that languish,
  The poppied sleep, the end of all.

HERMAPHRODITUS

I

Lift up thy lips, turn round, look back for love,
  Blind love that comes by night and casts out rest;
  Of all things tired thy lips look weariest,
Save the long smile that they are wearied of.
Ah sweet, albeit no love be sweet enough,
  Choose of two loves and cleave unto the best;
  Two loves at either blossom of thy breast
Strive until one be under and one above.
Their breath is fire upon the amorous air,
  Fire in thine eyes and where thy lips suspire:
And whosoever hath seen thee, being so fair,
  Two things turn all his life and blood to fire;
A strong desire begot on great despair,
  A great despair cast out by strong desire.

II

Where between sleep and life some brief space is,
  With love like gold bound round about the head,
  Sex to sweet sex with lips and limbs is wed,
Turning the fruitful feud of hers and his
To the waste wedlock of a sterile kiss;
  Yet from them something like as fire is shed
  That shall not be assuaged till death be dead,
Though neither life nor sleep can find out this.

Love made himself of flesh that perisheth
A pleasure-house for all the loves his kin;
But on the one side sat a man like death,
And on the other a woman sat like sin.
So with veiled eyes and sobs between his breath
Love turned himself and would not enter in.

III

Love, is it love or sleep or shadow or light
That lies between thine eyelids and thine eyes?
Like a flower laid upon a flower it lies,
Or like the night's dew laid upon the night.
Love stands upon thy left hand and thy right,
Yet by no sunset and by no moonrise
Shall make thee man and ease a woman's sighs,
Or make thee woman for a man's delight.
To what strange end hath some strange god made fair
The double blossom of two fruitless flowers?
Hid love in all the folds of all thy hair,
Fed thee on summers, watered thee with showers,
Given all the gold that all the seasons wear
To thee that art a thing of barren hours?

IV

Yea, love, I see; it is not love but fear.
Nay, sweet, it is not fear but love, I know;
Or wherefore should thy body's blossom blow
So sweetly, or thine eyelids leave so clear
Thy gracious eyes that never made a tear—
Though for their love our tears like blood should flow,
Though love and life and death should come and go,
So dreadful, so desirable, so dear?

Yea, sweet, I know; I saw in what swift wise
  Beneath the woman's and the water's kiss
  Thy moist limbs melted into Salmacis,
And the large light turned tender in thine eyes,
And all thy boy's breath softened into sighs;
  But Love being blind, how should he know of
    this?

Au Musée du Louvre, Mars 1863.

FRAGOLETTA

O Love! what shall be said of thee?
The son of grief begot by joy?
Being sightless, wilt thou see?
Being sexless, wilt thou be
Maiden or boy?

I dreamed of strange lips yesterday
And cheeks wherein the ambiguous blood
Was like a rose's—yea,
A rose's when it lay
Within the bud.

What fields have bred thee, or what groves
Concealed thee, O mysterious flower,
O double rose of Love's,
With leaves that lure the doves
From bud to bower?

I dare not kiss it, lest my lip
Press harder than an indrawn breath,
And all the sweet life slip
Forth, and the sweet leaves drip,
Bloodlike, in death.

O sole desire of my delight!
O sole delight of my desire!

Mine eyelids and eyesight
Feed on thee day and night
Like lips of fire.

Lean back thy throat of carven pearl,
Let thy mouth murmur like the dove's;
Say, Venus hath no girl,
No front of female curl,
Among her Loves.

Thy sweet low bosom, thy close hair,
Thy strait soft flanks and slenderer feet,
Thy virginal strange air,
Are these not over fair
For Love to greet?

How should he greet thee? what new name,
Fit to move all men's hearts, could move
Thee, deaf to love or shame,
Love's sister, by the same
Mother as Love?

Ah sweet, the maiden's mouth is cold,
Her breast-blossoms are simply red,
Her hair mere brown or gold,
Fold over simple fold
Binding her head.

Thy mouth is made of fire and wine,
Thy barren bosom takes my kiss
And turns my soul to thine
And turns thy lip to mine,
And mine it is.

Thou hast a serpent in thine hair,
In all the curls that close and cling;
And ah, thy breast-flower!
Ah love, thy mouth too fair
To kiss and sting!

Cleave to me, love me, kiss mine eyes,
Satiate thy lips with loving me;
Nay, for thou shalt not rise;
Lie still as Love that dies
For love of thee.

Mine arms are close about thine head,
My lips are fervent on thy face,
And where my kiss hath fed
Thy flower-like blood leaps red
To the kissed place.

O bitterness of things too sweet!
O broken singing of the dove!
Love's wings are over fleet,
And like the panther's feet
The feet of Love.

RONDEL

THESE many years since we began to be,
What have the gods done with us? what with me,
What with my love? they have shown me fates and
fears,
Harsh springs, and fountains bitterer than the sea,
Grief a fixed star, and joy a vane that veers,
These many years.

With her, my love, with her have they done well?
But who shall answer for her? who shall tell
Sweet things or sad, such things as no man hears?
May no tears fall, if no tears ever fell,
From eyes more dear to me than starriest spheres
These many years!

But if tears ever touched, for any grief,
Those eyelids folded like a white-rose leaf,
Deep double shells wherethrough the eye-flower
peers,
Let them weep once more only, sweet and brief,
Brief tears and bright, for one who gave her tears
These many years.

SATIA TE SANGUINE

If you loved me ever so little,
I could bear the bonds that gall,
I could dream the bonds were brittle;
You do not love me at all.

O beautiful lips, O bosom
More white than the moon's and warm,
A sterile, a ruinous blossom
Is blown your way in a storm.

As the lost white feverish limbs
Of the Lesbian Sappho, adrift
In foam where the sea-weed swims,
Swam loose for the streams to lift,

My heart swims blind in a sea
That stuns me; swims to and fro,
And gathers to windward and lee
Lamentation, and mourning, and woe.

A broken, an emptied boat,
Sea saps it, winds blow apart,
Sick and adrift and afloat,
The barren waif of a heart.

Where, when the gods would be cruel,
Do they go for a torture? where
Plant thorns, set pain like a jewel?
Ah, not in the flesh, not there!

The racks of earth and the rods
Are weak as foam on the sands;
In the heart is the prey for gods,
Who crucify hearts, not hands.

Mere pangs corrode and consume,
Dead when life dies in the brain;
In the infinite spirit is room
For the pulse of an infinite pain.

I wish you were dead, my dear;
I would give you, had I to give
Some death too bitter to fear;
It is better to die than live.

I wish you were stricken of thunder
And burnt with a bright flame through,
Consumed and cloven in sunder,
I dead at your feet like you.

If I could but know after all,
I might cease to hunger and ache,
Though your heart were ever so small,
If it were not a stone or a snake.

You are crueller, you that we love,
Than hatred, hunger, or death;
You have eyes and breasts like a dove,
And you kill men's hearts with a breath

As plague in a poisonous city
Insults and exults on her dead,
So you, when pallid for pity
Comes love, and fawns to be fed.

As a tame beast writhes and wheedles,
He fawns to be fed with wiles ;
You carve him a cross of needles,
And whet them sharp as your smiles.

He is patient of thorn and whip,
He is dumb under axe or dart ;
You suck with a sleepy red lip
The wet red wounds in his heart.

You thrill as his pulses dwindle,
You brighten and warm as he bleeds,
With insatiable eyes that kindle
And insatiable mouth that feeds.

Your hands nailed love to the tree,
You stript him, scourged him with rods,
And drowned him deep in the sea
That hides the dead and their gods.

And for all this, die will he not ;
There is no man sees him but I ;
You came and went and forgot ;
I hope he will some day die.

A LITANY

ἐν οὐρανῷ φαεννὰς
κρύψω παρ' ὑμὶν αὐγὰς,
μίας πρὸ νυκτὸς ἑπτὰ νύκτας ἔξετε, κ.τ.λ.
Anth. Sac.

FIRST ANTIPHONE

All the bright lights of heaven
I will make dark over thee ;
One night shall be as seven
That its skirts may cover thee ;
I will send on thy strong men a sword,
On thy remnant a rod ;
Ye shall know that I am the Lord,
Saith the Lord God.

SECOND ANTIPHONE

All the bright lights of heaven
Thou hast made dark over us ;
One night has been as seven
That its skirt might cover us ;
Thou hast sent on our strong men a sword,
On our remnant a rod ;
We know that thou art the Lord,
O Lord our God.

THIRD ANTIPHONE

As the tresses and wings of the wind
Are scattered and shaken,
I will scatter all them that have sinned,
There shall none be taken ;
As a sower that scattereth seed,
So will I scatter them ;
As one breaketh and shattereth a reed,
I will break and shatter them.

FOURTH ANTIPHONE

As the wings and the locks of the wind
Are scattered and shaken,
Thou hast scattered all them that have sinned,
There was no man taken ;
As a sower that scattereth seed,
So hast thou scattered us ;
As one breaketh and shattereth a reed,
Thou hast broken and shattered us.

FIFTH ANTIPHONE

From all thy lovers that love thee
I God will sunder thee ;
I will make darkness above thee,
And thick darkness under thee ;
Before me goeth a light,
Behind me a sword ;
Shall a remnant find grace in my sight ?
I am the Lord.

SIXTH ANTIPHONE

From all our lovers that love us
Thou God didst sunder us ;
Thou madest darkness above us,
And thick darkness under us ;
Thou hast kindled thy wrath for a light,
And made ready thy sword ;
Let a remnant find grace in thy sight,
We beseech thee, O Lord.

SEVENTH ANTIPHONE

Wilt thou bring fine gold for a payment
For sins on this wise ?
For the glittering of raiment
And the shining of eyes,
For the painting of faces
And the sundering of trust,
For the sins of thine high places
And delight of thy lust ?

For your high things ye shall have lowly,
Lamentation for song ;
For, behold, I God am holy,
I the Lord am strong ;
Ye shall seek me and shall not reach me
Till the wine-press be trod ;
In that hour ye shall turn and beseech me,
Saith the Lord God.

EIGHTH ANTIPHONE

Not with fine gold for a payment,
But with coin of sighs,
But with rending of raiment
And with weeping of eyes,
But with shame of stricken faces
And with strewing of dust,
For the sin of stately places
And lordship of lust;

With voices of men made lowly,
Made empty of song,
O Lord God most holy,
O God most strong,
We reach out hands to reach thee
Ere the wine-press be trod;
We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee,
O Lord our God.

NINTH ANTIPHONE

In that hour thou shalt say to the night,
Come down and cover us;
To the cloud on thy left and thy right,
Be thou spread over us;
A snare shall be as thy mother,
And a curse thy bride;
Thou shalt put her away, and another
Shall lie by thy side.

Thou shalt neither rise up by day
Nor lie down by night;
Would God it were dark! thou shalt say;
Would God it were light!

And the sight of thine eyes shall be made
As the burning of fire ;
And thy soul shall be sorely afraid
For thy soul's desire.

Ye whom your lords loved well,
Putting silver and gold on you,
The inevitable hell
Shall surely take hold on you ;
Your gold shall be for a token,
Your staff for a rod ;
With the breaking of bands ye are broken,
Saith the Lord God.

TENTH ANTIPHONE

In our sorrow we said to the night,
Fall down and cover us ;
To the darkness at left and at right,
Be thou shed over us ;
We had breaking of spirit to mother
And cursing to bride ;
And one was slain, and another
Stood up at our side.

We could not arise by day,
Nor lie down by night ;
Thy sword was sharp in our way,
Thy word in our sight ;
The delight of our eyelids was made
As the burning of fire ;
And our souls became sorely afraid
For our soul's desire.

We whom the world loved well,
Laying silver and gold on us,
The kingdom of death and of hell
Riseth up to take hold on us;
Our gold is turned to a token,
Our staff to a rod;
Yet shalt thou bind them up that were broken,
O Lord our God.

A LAMENTATION

I

Who hath known the ways of time
  Or trodden behind his feet?
    There is no such man among men.
For chance overcomes him, or crime
  Changes; for all things sweet
    In time wax bitter again.
Who shall give sorrow enough,
  Or who the abundance of tears?
Mine eyes are heavy with love
  And a sword gone thorough mine ears,
    A sound like a sword and fire,
    For pity, for great desire;
Who shall ensure me thereof,
  Lest I die, being full of my fears?

Who hath known the ways and the wrath,
  The sleepless spirit, the root
    And blossom of evil will,
      The divine device of a god?
Who shall behold it or hath?
  The twice-tongued prophets are mute,
    The many speakers are still;
      No foot has travelled or trod,

No hand has meted, his path.
Man's fate is a blood-red fruit,
And the mighty gods have their fill
And relax not the rein, or the rod.

Ye were mighty in heart from of old,
Ye slew with the spear, and are slain.
Keen after heat is the cold,
Sore after summer is rain,
And melteth man to the bone.
As water he weareth away,
As a flower, as an hour in a day,
Fallen from laughter to moan.
But my spirit is shaken with fear
Lest an evil thing begin,
New-born, a spear for a spear,
And one for another sin.
Or ever our tears began,
It was known from of old and said;
One law for a living man,
And another law for the dead.
For these are fearful and sad,
Vain, and things without breath;
While he lives let a man be glad,
For none hath joy of his death.

II

Who hath known the pain, the old pain of earth,
Or all the travail of the sea,
The many ways and waves, the birth
Fruitless, the labour nothing worth?
Who hath known, who knoweth, O gods? not we.

There is none shall say he hath seen,
  There is none he hath known.
Though he saith, Lo, a lord have I been,
  I have reaped and sown ;
I have seen the desire of mine eyes,
  The beginning of love,
The season of kisses and sighs
  And the end thereof.
I have known the ways of the sea,
  All the perilous ways,
Strange winds have spoken with me,
  And the tongues of strange days.
I have hewn the pine for ships ;
  Where steeds run arow,
I have seen from their bridled lips
  Foam blown as the snow.
With snapping of chariot-poles
  And with straining of oars
I have grazed in the race the goals,
  In the storm the shores ;
As a greave is cleft with an arrow
  At the joint of the knee,
I have cleft through the sea-straits narrow
  To the heart of the sea.
When air was smitten in sunder
  I have watched on high
The ways of the stars and the thunder
  In the night of the sky ;
Where the dark brings forth light as a flower,
  As from lips that dissever ;
One abideth the space of an hour,
  One endureth for ever.

Lo, what hath he seen or known,
Of the way and the wave
Unbeholden, unsailed on, unsown,
From the breast to the grave ?

Or ever the stars were made, or skies,
Grief was born, and the kinless night,
Mother of gods without form or name.
And light is born out of heaven and dies,
And one day knows not another's light,
But night is one, and her shape the same.

But dumb the goddesses underground
Wait, and we hear not on earth if their feet
Rise, and the night wax loud with their wings;
Dumb, without word or shadow of sound ;
And sift in scales and winnow as wheat
Men's souls, and sorrow of manifold things.

III

Nor less of grief than ours
The gods wrought long ago
To bruise men one by one ;
But with the incessant hours
Fresh grief and greener woe
Spring, as the sudden sun
Year after year makes flowers ;
And these die down and grow,
And the next year lacks none.

As these men sleep, have slept
The old heroes in time fled,
No dream-divided sleep ;

And holier eyes have wept
  Than ours, when on her dead
    Gods have seen Thetis weep,
With heavenly hair far-swept
  Back, heavenly hands outspread
    Round what she could not keep,

Could not one day withhold,
  One night; and like as these
    White ashes of no weight,
Held not his urn the cold
  Ashes of Heracles?
    For all things born one gate
Opens, no gate of gold;
  Opens; and no man sees
    Beyond the gods and fate.

ANIMA ANCEPS

Till death have broken
Sweet life's love-token,
Till all be spoken
That shall be said,
What dost thou praying,
O soul, and playing
With song and saying,
Things flown and fled?
For this we know not—
That fresh springs flow not
And fresh griefs grow not
When men are dead;
When strange years cover
Lover and lover,
And joys are over
And tears are shed.

If one day's sorrow
Mar the day's morrow—
If man's life borrow
And man's death pay—
If souls once taken,
If lives once shaken,
Arise, awaken,
By night, by day—

Why with strong crying
And years of sighing,
Living and dying,
  Fast ye and pray?
For all your weeping,
Waking and sleeping,
Death comes to reaping
  And takes away.

Though time rend after
Roof-tree from rafter,
A little laughter
  Is much more worth
Than thus to measure
The hour, the treasure,
The pain, the pleasure,
  The death, the birth;
Grief, when days alter,
Like joy shall falter;
Song-book and psalter,
  Mourning and mirth,
Live like the swallow;
Seek not to follow
Where earth is hollow
  Under the earth.

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IN THE ORCHARD

(PROVENÇAL BURDEN)

LEAVE go my hands, let me catch breath and see ;
Let the dew-fall drench either side of me ;
  Clear apple-leaves are soft upon that moon
Seen sidelong like a blossom in the tree ;
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

The grass is thick and cool, it lets us lie.
Kissed upon either cheek and either eye,
  I turn to thee as some green afternoon
Turns toward sunset, and is loth to die ;
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Lie closer, lean your face upon my side,
Feel where the dew fell that has hardly dried,
  Hear how the blood beats that went nigh to swoon ;
The pleasure lives there when the sense has died ;
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

O my fair lord, I charge you leave me this :
Is it not sweeter than a foolish kiss ?
  Nay take it then, my flower, my first in June,
My rose, so like a tender mouth it is :
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Love, till dawn sunder night from day with fire,
Dividing my delight and my desire,
  The crescent life and love the plenilune,
Love me though dusk begin and dark retire ;
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Ah, my heart fails, my blood draws back ; I know,
When life runs over, life is near to go ;
  And with the slain of love love's ways are strewn,
And with their blood, if love will have it so ;
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Ah, do thy will now ; slay me if thou wilt ;
There is no building now the walls are built,
  No quarrying now the corner-stone is hewn,
No drinking now the vine's whole blood is spilt ;
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Nay, slay me now ; nay, for I will be slain ;
Pluck thy red pleasure from the teeth of pain,
  Break down thy vine ere yet grape-gatherers prune,
Slay me ere day can slay desire again ;
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Yea, with thy sweet lips, with thy sweet sword ; yea,
Take life and all, for I will die, I say ;
  Love, I gave love, is life a better boon ?
For sweet night's sake I will not live till day ;
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Nay, I will sleep then only ; nay, but go.
Ah sweet, too sweet to me, my sweet, I know
  Love, sleep, and death go to the sweet same tune ;
Hold my hair fast, and kiss me through it so.
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

A MATCH

If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf,
Our lives would grow together
In sad or singing weather,
Blown fields or flowerful closes,
Green pleasure or grey grief;
If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,
And love were like the tune,
With double sound and single
Delight our lips would mingle,
With kisses glad as birds are
That get sweet rain at noon;
If I were what the words are,
And love were like the tune.

If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death,
We'd shine and snow together
Ere March made sweet the weather
With daffodil and starling
And hours of fruitful breath;
If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death.

If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy,
We'd play for lives and seasons
With loving looks and treasons
And tears of night and morrow
And laughs of maid and boy ;
If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy.

If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May,
We'd throw with leaves for hours
And draw for days with flowers,
Till day like night were shady
And night were bright like day ;
If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain,
We'd hunt down love together,
Pluck out his flying-feather,
And teach his feet a measure,
And find his mouth a rein ;
If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain.

FAUSTINE

Ave Faustina Imperatrix, morituri te salutant.

LEAN back, and get some minutes' peace ;
Let your head lean
Back to the shoulder with its fleece
Of locks, Faustine.

The shapely silver shoulder stoops,
Weighed over clean
With state of splendid hair that droops
Each side, Faustine.

Let me go over your good gifts
That crown you queen ;
A queen whose kingdom ebbs and shifts
Each week, Faustine.

Bright heavy brows well gathered up :
White gloss and sheen ;
Carved lips that make my lips a cup
To drink, Faustine,

Wine and rank poison, milk and blood,
Being mixed therein
Since first the devil threw dice with God
For you, Faustine.

Your naked new-born soul, their stake,
Stood blind between ;
God said "let him that wins her take
And keep Faustine."

But this time Satan throve, no doubt ;
Long since, I ween,
God's part in you was battered out ;
Long since, Faustine.

The die rang sideways as it fell,
Rang cracked and thin,
Like a man's laughter heard in hell
Far down, Faustine,

A shadow of laughter like a sigh,
Dead sorrow's kin ;
So rang, thrown down, the devil's die
That won Faustine.

A suckling of his breed you were,
One hard to wean ;
But God, who lost you, left you fair,
We see, Faustine.

You have the face that suits a woman
For her soul's screen—
The sort of beauty that's called human
In hell, Faustine.

You could do all things but be good
Or chaste of mien ;
And that you would not if you could,
We know, Faustine.

Even he who cast seven devils out
Of Magdalene
Could hardly do as much, I doubt,
For you, Faustine.

Did Satan make you to spite God?
Or did God mean
To scourge with scorpions for a rod
Our sins, Faustine?

I know what queen at first you were,
As though I had seen
Red gold and black imperious hair
Twice crown Faustine.

As if your fed sarcophagus
Spared flesh and skin,
You come back face to face with us,
The same Faustine.

She loved the games men played with death,
Where death must win;
As though the slain man's blood and breath
Revived Faustine.

Nets caught the pike, pikes tore the net;
Lithe limbs and lean
From drained-out pores dripped thick red sweat
To soothe Faustine.

She drank the steaming drift and dust
Blown off the scene;
Blood could not ease the bitter lust
That galled Faustine.

All round the foul fat furrows reeked,
Where blood sank in ;
The circus splashed and seethed and shrieked
All round Faustine.

But these are gone now : years entomb
The dust and din ;
Yea, even the bath's fierce reek and fume
That slew Faustine.

Was life worth living then ? and now
Is life worth sin ?
Where are the imperial years ? and how
Are you Faustine ?

Your soul forgot her joys, forgot
Her times of teen ;
Yea, this life likewise will you not
Forget, Faustine ?

For in the time we know not of
Did fate begin
Weaving the web of days that wove
Your doom, Faustine.

The threads were wet with wine, and all
Were smooth to spin ;
They wove you like a Bacchanal,
The first Faustine.

And Bacchus cast your mates and you
Wild grapes to glean ;
Your flower-like lips were dashed with dew
From his, Faustine.

Your drenched loose hands were stretched to hold
The vine's wet green,
Long ere they coined in Roman gold
Your face, Faustine.

Then after change of soaring feather
And winnowing fin,
You woke in weeks of feverish weather,
A new Faustine.

A star upon your birthday burned,
Whose fierce serene
Red pulseless planet never yearned
In heaven, Faustine.

Stray breaths of Sapphic song that blew
Through Mitylene
Shook the fierce quivering blood in you
By night, Faustine.

The shameless nameless love that makes
Hell's iron gin
Shut on you like a trap that breaks
The soul, Faustine.

And when your veins were void and dead,
What ghosts unclean
Swarmed round the straitened barren bed
That hid Faustine?

What sterile growths of sexless root
Or epicene?
What flower of kisses without fruit
Of love, Faustine?

What adders came to shed their coats?
What coiled obscene
Small serpents with soft stretching throats
Caressed Faustine?

But the time came of famished hours,
Maimed loves and mean,
This ghastly thin-faced time of ours,
To spoil Faustine.

You seem a thing that hinges hold,
A love-machine
With clockwork joints of supple gold—
No more, Faustine.

Not godless, for you serve one God,
The Lampsacene,
Who metes the gardens with his rod;
Your lord, Faustine.

If one should love you with real love
(Such things have been,
Things your fair face knows nothing of,
It seems, Faustine);

That clear hair heavily bound back,
The lights wherein
Shift from dead blue to burnt-up black;
Your throat, Faustine,

Strong, heavy, throwing out the face
And hard bright chin
And shameful scornful lips that grace
Their shame, Faustine,

Curled lips, long since half kissed away,
Still sweet and keen ;
You'd give him—poison shall we say ?
Or what, Faustine ?

A CAMEO

THERE was a graven image of Desire
Painted with red blood on a ground of gold
Passing between the young men and the old,
And by him Pain, whose body shone like fire,
And Pleasure with gaunt hands that grasped their hire.
Of his left wrist, with fingers clenched and cold,
The insatiable Satiety kept hold,
Walking with feet unshod that pashed the mire.
The senses and the sorrows and the sins,
And the strange loves that suck the breasts of Hate
Till lips and teeth bite in their sharp indenture,
Followed like beasts with flap of wings and fins.
Death stood aloof behind a gaping grate,
Upon whose lock was written *Peradventure.*

SONG BEFORE DEATH

(FROM THE FRENCH)

1795

Sweet mother, in a minute's span
  Death parts thee and my love of thee;
Sweet love, that yet art living man,
  Come back, true love, to comfort me.
Back, ah, come back! ah wellaway!
But my love comes not any day.

As roses, when the warm West blows,
  Break to full flower and sweeten spring,
My soul would break to a glorious rose
  In such wise at his whispering.
In vain I listen; wellaway!
My love says nothing any day.

You that will weep for pity of love
  On the low place where I am lain,
I pray you, having wept enough,
  Tell him for whom I bore such pain
That he was yet, ah! wellaway!
My true love to my dying day.

ROCOCO

Take hands and part with laughter ;
  Touch lips and part with tears ;
Once more and no more after,
  Whatever comes with years.
We twain shall not remeasure
  The ways that left us twain ;
Nor crush the lees of pleasure
  From sanguine grapes of pain.

We twain once well in sunder,
  What will the mad gods do
For hate with me, I wonder,
  Or what for love with you ?
Forget them till November,
  And dream there's April yet ;
Forget that I remember,
  And dream that I forget.

Time found our tired love sleeping,
  And kissed away his breath ;
But what should we do weeping,
  Though light love sleep to death ?
We have drained his lips at leisure,
  Till there's not left to drain
A single sob of pleasure,
  A single pulse of pain.

Dream that the lips once breathless
Might quicken if they would ;
Say that the soul is deathless ;
Dream that the gods are good ;
Say March may wed September,
And time divorce regret ;
But not that you remember,
And not that I forget.

We have heard from hidden places
What love scarce lives and hears :
We have seen on fervent faces
The pallor of strange tears :
We have trod the wine-vat's treasure,
Whence, ripe to steam and stain,
Foams round the feet of pleasure
The blood-red must of pain.

Remembrance may recover
And time bring back to time
The name of your first lover,
The ring of my first rhyme ;
But rose-leaves of December
The frosts of June shall fret,
The day that you remember,
The day that I forget.

The snake that hides and hisses
In heaven we twain have known ;
The grief of cruel kisses,
The joy whose mouth makes moan ;

The pulse's pause and measure,
  Where in one furtive vein
Throbs through the heart of pleasure
  The purpler blood of pain.

We have done with tears and treasons
  And love for treason's sake ;
Room for the swift new seasons,
  The years that burn and break,
Dismantle and dismember
  Men's days and dreams, Juliette ;
For love may not remember,
  But time will not forget.

Life treads down love in flying,
  Time withers him at root ;
Bring all dead things and dying,
  Reaped sheaf and ruined fruit,
Where, crushed by three days' pressure,
  Our three days' love lies slain ;
And earlier leaf of pleasure,
  And latter flower of pain.

Breathe close upon the ashes,
  It may be flame will leap ;
Unclose the soft close lashes,
  Lift up the lids, and weep.
Light love's extinguished ember,
  Let one tear leave it wet
For one that you remember
  And ten that you forget.

STAGE LOVE

When the game began between them for a jest,
He played king and she played queen to match the best ;
Laughter soft as tears, and tears that turned to laughter,
These were things she sought for years and sorrowed after.

Pleasure with dry lips, and pain that walks by night
All the sting and all the stain of long delight ;
These were things she knew not of, that knew not of her,
When she played at half a love with half a lover.

Time was chorus, gave them cues to laugh or cry ;
They would kill, befool, amuse him, let him die ;
Set him webs to weave to-day and break to-morrow,
Till he died for good in play, and rose in sorrow.

What the years mean ; how time dies and is not slain ;
How love grows and laughs and cries and wanes again ;
These were things she came to know, and take their measure,
When the play was played out so for one man's pleasure.

THE LEPER

Nothing is better, I well think,
  Than love ; the hidden well-water
Is not so delicate to drink :
  This was well seen of me and her.

I served her in a royal house ;
  I served her wine and curious meat.
For will to kiss between her brows,
  I had no heart to sleep or eat.

Mere scorn God knows she had of me,
  A poor scribe, nowise great or fair,
Who plucked his clerk's hood back to see
  Her curled-up lips and amorous hair.

I vex my head with thinking this.
  Yea, though God always hated me,
And hates me now that I can kiss
  Her eyes, plait up her hair to see

How she then wore it on the brows,
  Yet am I glad to have her dead
Here in this wretched wattled house
  Where I can kiss her eyes and head.

Nothing is better, I well know,
  Than love ; no amber in cold sea
Or gathered berries under snow :
  That is well seen of her and me.

Three thoughts I make my pleasure of :
  First I take heart and think of this :
That knight's gold hair she chose to love,
  His mouth she had such will to kiss.

Then I remember that sundawn
  I brought him by a privy way
Out at her lattice, and thereon
  What gracious words she found to say.

(Cold rushes for such little feet—
  Both feet could lie into my hand.
A marvel was it of my sweet
  Her upright body could so stand.)

" Sweet friend, God give you thank and grace ;
  Now am I clean and whole of shame,
Nor shall men burn me in the face
  For my sweet fault that scandals them."

I tell you over word by word.
  She, sitting edgewise on her bed,
Holding her feet, said thus. The third,
  A sweeter thing than these, I said.

God, that makes time and ruins it
  And alters not, abiding God,
Changed with disease her body sweet,
  The body of love wherein she abode.

Love is more sweet and comelier
Than a dove's throat strained out to sing.
All they spat out and cursed at her
And cast her forth for a base thing.

They cursed her, seeing how God had wrought
This curse to plague her, a curse of his.
Fools were they surely, seeing not
How sweeter than all sweet she is.

He that had held her by the hair,
With kissing lips blinding her eyes,
Felt her bright bosom, strained and bare,
Sigh under him, with short mad cries

Out of her throat and sobbing mouth
And body broken up with love,
With sweet hot tears his lips were loth
Her own should taste the savour of,

Yea, he inside whose grasp all night
Her fervent body leapt or lay,
Stained with sharp kisses red and white,
Found her a plague to spurn away.

I hid her in this wattled house,
I served her water and poor bread.
For joy to kiss between her brows
Time upon time I was nigh dead.

Bread failed ; we got but well-water
And gathered grass with dropping seed.
I had such joy of kissing her,
I had small care to sleep or feed.

Sometimes when service made me glad
The sharp tears leapt between my lids,
Falling on her, such joy I had
To do the service God forbids.

"I pray you let me be at peace,
Get hence, make room for me to die."
She said that: her poor lip would cease,
Put up to mine, and turn to cry.

I said, "Bethink yourself how love
Fared in us twain, what either did;
Shall I unclothe my soul thereof?
That I should do this, God forbid."

Yea, though God hateth us, he knows
That hardly in a little thing
Love faileth of the work it does
Till it grow ripe for gathering.

Six months, and now my sweet is dead
A trouble takes me; I know not
If all were done well, all well said,
No word or tender deed forgot.

Too sweet, for the least part in her,
To have shed life out by fragments; yet,
Could the close mouth catch breath and stir,
I might see something I forget.

Six months, and I sit still and hold
In two cold palms her cold two feet.
Her hair, half grey half ruined gold,
Thrills me and burns me in kissing it.

Love bites and stings me through, to see
Her keen face made of sunken bones.
Her worn-off eyelids madden me,
That were shot through with purple once.

She said, "Be good with me; I grow
So tired for shame's sake, I shall die
If you say nothing:" even so.
And she is dead now, and shame put by.

Yea, and the scorn she had of me
In the old time, doubtless vexed her then.
I never should have kissed her. See
What fools God's anger makes of men!

She might have loved me a little too,
Had I been humbler for her sake.
But that new shame could make love new
She saw not—yet her shame did make.

I took too much upon my love,
Having for such mean service done
Her beauty and all the ways thereof,
Her face and all the sweet thereon.

Yea, all this while I tended her,
I know the old love held fast his part:
I know the old scorn waxed heavier,
Mixed with sad wonder, in her heart.

It may be all my love went wrong—
A scribe's work writ awry and blurred,
Scrawled after the blind evensong—
Spoilt music with no perfect word.

But surely I would fain have done
All things the best I could. Perchance
Because I failed, came short of one,
She kept at heart that other man's.

I am grown blind with all these things :
It may be now she hath in sight
Some better knowledge ; still there clings
The old question. Will not God do right ? *

* En ce temps-là estoyt dans ce pays grand nombre de ladres et de meseaulx, ce dont le roy eut grand desplaisir, veu que Dieu dust en estre moult griefvement courroucé. Ores il advint qu'une noble damoyselle appelée Yolande de Sallières estant atteincte et touste guastée de ce vilain mal, tous ses amys et ses parens ayant devant leurs yeux la paour de Dieu la firent issir fors de leurs maisons et oncques ne voulurent recepvoir ni reconforter chose mauldicte de Dieu et à tous les hommes puante et abhominable. Ceste dame avoyt esté moult belle et gracieuse de formes, et de son corps elle estoyt large et de vie lascive. Pourtant nul des amans qui l'avoyent souventesfois accollée et baisée moult tendrement ne voulust plus héberger si laide femme et si détestable pescheresse. Ung seul clerc qui feut premièrement son lacquays et son entremetteur en matière d'amour la reçut chez luy et la récéla dans une petite cabane. Là mourut la meschinette de grande misère et de male mort : et après elle décéda ledist clerc qui pour grand amour l'avoyt six mois durant soignée, lavée, habillée et deshabillée tous les jours de ses mains propres. Mesme dist-on que ce meschant homme et mauldict clerc se remémourant de la grande beauté passée et guastée de ceste femme se délectoyt maintesfois à la baiser sur sa bouche orde et lépreuse et l'accoller doulcement de ses mains amoureuses. Aussy est-il mort de ceste mesme maladie abhominable. Cecy advint près Fontainebellant en Gastinois. Et quand ouyt le roy Philippe ceste adventure moult en estoyt esmerveillé.

Grandes Chroniques de France, 1505.

A BALLAD OF BURDENS

The burden of fair women. Vain delight,
And love self-slain in some sweet shameful way,
And sorrowful old age that comes by night
As a thief comes that has no heart by day,
And change that finds fair cheeks and leaves them grey,
And weariness that keeps awake for hire,
And grief that says what pleasure used to say;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bought kisses. This is sore,
A burden without fruit in childbearing;
Between the nightfall and the dawn threescore,
Threescore between the dawn and evening.
The shuddering in thy lips, the shuddering
In thy sad eyelids tremulous like fire,
Makes love seem shameful and a wretched thing.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sweet speeches. Nay, kneel down,
Cover thy head, and weep; for verily
These market-men that buy thy white and brown
In the last days shall take no thought for thee.
In the last days like earth thy face shall be,
Yea, like sea-marsh made thick with brine and mire,
Sad with sick leavings of the sterile sea.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of long living. Thou shalt fear
Waking, and sleeping mourn upon thy bed ;
And say at night "Would God the day were here,"
And say at dawn "Would God the day were dead."
With weary days thou shalt be clothed and fed,
And wear remorse of heart for thine attire,
Pain for thy girdle and sorrow upon thine head ;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bright colours. Thou shalt see
Gold tarnished, and the grey above the green ;
And as the thing thou seest thy face shall be,
And no more as the thing beforetime seen.
And thou shalt say of mercy "It hath been,"
And living, watch the old lips and loves expire,
And talking, tears shall take thy breath between ;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sad sayings. In that day
Thou shalt tell all thy days and hours, and tell
Thy times and ways and words of love, and say
How one was dear and one desirable,
And sweet was life to hear and sweet to smell,
But now with lights reverse the old hours retire
And the last hour is shod with fire from hell ;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of four seasons. Rain in spring,
White rain and wind among the tender trees ;
A summer of green sorrows gathering,
Rank autumn in a mist of miseries,
With sad face set towards the year, that sees
The charred ash drop out of the dropping pyre,
And winter wan with many maladies ;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of dead faces. Out of sight
And out of love, beyond the reach of hands,
Changed in the changing of the dark and light,
They walk and weep about the barren lands
Where no seed is nor any garner stands,
Where in short breaths the doubtful days respire,
And time's turned glass lets through the sighing sands ;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of much gladness. Life and lust
Forsake thee, and the face of thy delight ;
And underfoot the heavy hour strews dust,
And overhead strange weathers burn and bite ;
And where the red was, lo the bloodless white,
And where truth was, the likeness of a liar,
And where day was, the likeness of the night ;
This is the end of every man's desire.

L'ENVOY

Princes, and ye whom pleasure quickeneth,
Heed well this rhyme before your pleasure tire ;
For life is sweet, but after life is death.
This is the end of every man's desire.

RONDEL

Kissing her hair I sat against her feet,
Wove and unwove it, wound and found it sweet ;
Made fast therewith her hands, drew down her eyes,
Deep as deep flowers and dreamy like dim skies ;
With her own tresses bound and found her fair,
Kissing her hair.

Sleep were no sweeter than her face to me,
Sleep of cold sea-bloom under the cold sea ;
What pain could get between my face and hers ?
What new sweet thing would love not relish worse ?
Unless, perhaps, white death had kissed me there,
Kissing her hair ?

BEFORE THE MIRROR

(VERSES WRITTEN UNDER A PICTURE)

INSCRIBED TO J. A. WHISTLER

I

WHITE rose in red rose-garden
Is not so white;
Snowdrops that plead for pardon
And pine for fright
Because the hard East blows
Over their maiden rows
Grow not as this face grows from pale to bright.

Behind the veil, forbidden,
Shut up from sight,
Love, is there sorrow hidden,
Is there delight?
Is joy thy dower or grief,
White rose of weary leaf,
Late rose whose life is brief, whose loves are light?

Soft snows that hard winds harden
Till each flake bite
Fill all the flowerless garden
Whose flowers took flight

Long since when summer ceased,
And men rose up from feast,
  And warm west wind grew east, and warm day night.

II

"Come snow, come wind or thunder
  High up in air,
I watch my face, and wonder
  At my bright hair;
Nought else exalts or grieves
The rose at heart, that heaves
  With love of her own leaves and lips that pair.

"She knows not loves that kissed her
  She knows not where.
Art thou the ghost, my sister,
  White sister there,
Am I the ghost, who knows?
My hand, a fallen rose,
  Lies snow-white on white snows, and takes no care.

"I cannot see what pleasures
  Or what pains were;
What pale new loves and treasures
  New years will bear;
What beam will fall, what shower,
What grief or joy for dower;
  But one thing knows the flower; the flower is fair."

III

Glad, but not flushed with gladness,
Since joys go by ;
Sad, but not bent with sadness,
Since sorrows die ;
Deep in the gleaming glass
She sees all past things pass,
And all sweet life that was lie down and lie.

There glowing ghosts of flowers
Draw down, draw nigh ;
And wings of swift spent hours
Take flight and fly ;
She sees by formless gleams,
She hears across cold streams,
Dead mouths of many dreams that sing and sigh.

Face fallen and white throat lifted,
With sleepless eye
She sees old loves that drifted,
She knew not why,
Old loves and faded fears
Float down a stream that hears
The flowing of all men's tears beneath the sky.

EROTION

Sweet for a little even to fear, and sweet,
O love, to lay down fear at love's fair feet ;
Shall not some fiery memory of his breath
Lie sweet on lips that touch the lips of death ?
Yet leave me not ; yet, if thou wilt, be free ;
Love me no more, but love my love of thee.
Love where thou wilt, and live thy life ; and I,
One thing I can, and one love cannot—die.
Pass from me ; yet thine arms, thine eyes, thine hair.
Feed my desire and deaden my despair.
Yet once more ere time change us, ere my cheek
Whiten, ere hope be dumb or sorrow speak,
Yet once more ere thou hate me, one full kiss ;
Keep other hours for others, save me this.
Yea, and I will not (if it please thee) weep,
Lest thou be sad ; I will but sigh, and sleep.
Sweet, does death hurt? thou canst not do me wrong :
I shall not lack thee, as I loved thee, long.
Hast thou not given me above all that live
Joy, and a little sorrow shalt not give ?
What even though fairer fingers of strange girls
Pass nestling through thy beautiful boy's curls
As mine did, or those curled lithe lips of thine
Meet theirs as these, all theirs come after mine ;

And though I were not, though I be not, best,
I have loved and love thee more than all the rest.
O love, O lover, loose or hold me fast,
I had thee first, whoever have thee last;
Fairer or not, what need I know, what care?
To thy fair bud my blossom once seemed fair.
Why am I fair at all before thee, why
At all desired? seeing thou art fair, not I.
I shall be glad of thee, O fairest head,
Alive, alone, without thee, with thee, dead;
I shall remember while the light lives yet,
And in the night-time I shall not forget.
Though (as thou wilt) thou leave me ere life leave,
I will not, for thy love I will not, grieve;
Not as they use who love not more than I,
Who love not as I love thee though I die;
And though thy lips, once mine, be oftener prest
To many another brow and balmier breast,
And sweeter arms, or sweeter to thy mind,
Lull thee or lure, more fond thou wilt not find.

IN MEMORY OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

Back to the flower-town, side by side,
The bright months bring,
New-born, the bridegroom and the bride,
Freedom and spring.

The sweet land laughs from sea to sea,
Filled full of sun;
All things come back to her, being free;
All things but one.

In many a tender wheaten plot
Flowers that were dead
Live, and old suns revive; but not
That holier head.

By this white wandering waste of sea,
Far north, I hear
One face shall never turn to me
As once this year:

Shall never smile and turn and rest
On mine as there,
Nor one most sacred hand be prest
Upon my hair.

I came as one whose thoughts half linger,
Half run before ;
The youngest to the oldest singer
That England bore.

I found him whom I shall not find
Till all grief end,
In holiest age our mightiest mind,
Father and friend.

But thou, if anything endure,
If hope there be,
O spirit that man's life left pure,
Man's death set free,

Not with disdain of days that were
Look earthward now ;
Let dreams revive the reverend hair,
The imperial brow ;

Come back in sleep, for in the life
Where thou art not
We find none like thee. Time and strife
And the world's lot

Move thee no more ; but love at least
And reverent heart
May move thee, royal and released,
Soul, as thou art.

And thou, his Florence, to thy trust
Receive and keep,
Keep safe his dedicated dust,
His sacred sleep.

So shall thy lovers, come from far,
Mix with thy name
As morning-star with evening-star
His faultless fame

A SONG IN TIME OF ORDER. 1852

PUSH hard across the sand,
For the salt wind gathers breath;
Shoulder and wrist and hand,
Push hard as the push of death.

The wind is as iron that rings,
The foam-heads loosen and flee;
It swells and welters and swings,
The pulse of the tide of the sea.

And up on the yellow cliff
The long corn flickers and shakes;
Push, for the wind holds stiff,
And the gunwale dips and rakes.

Good hap to the fresh fierce weather,
The quiver and beat of the sea!
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

Out to the sea with her there,
Out with her over the sand;
Let the kings keep the earth for their share!
We have done with the sharers of land.

They have tied the world in a tether,
They have bought over God with a fee;
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

We have done with the kisses that sting,
The thief's mouth red from the feast,
The blood on the hands of the king
And the lie at the lips of the priest.

Will they tie the winds in a tether,
Put a bit in the jaws of the sea?
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

Let our flag run out straight in the wind!
The old red shall be floated again
When the ranks that are thin shall be thinned,
When the names that were twenty are ten;

When the devil's riddle is mastered
And the galley-bench creaks with a Pope,
We shall see Buonaparte the bastard
Kick heels with his throat in a rope.

While the shepherd sets wolves on his sheep
And the emperor halters his kine,
While Shame is a watchman asleep
And Faith is a keeper of swine,

Let the wind shake our flag like a feather,
Like the plumes of the foam of the sea!
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

All the world has its burdens to bear,
From Cayenne to the Austrian whips;
Forth, with the rain in our hair
And the salt sweet foam in our lips;

In the teeth of the hard glad weather,
In the blown wet face of the sea;
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

A SONG IN TIME OF REVOLUTION. 1860

The heart of the rulers is sick, and the high-priest covers his head :
For this is the song of the quick that is heard in the ears of the dead.

The poor and the halt and the blind are keen and mighty and fleet :
Like the noise of the blowing of wind is the sound of the noise of their feet.

The wind has the sound of a laugh in the clamour of days and of deeds :
The priests are scattered like chaff, and the rulers broken like reeds.

The high-priest sick from qualms, with his raiment bloodily dashed ;
The thief with branded palms, and the liar with cheeks abashed.

They are smitten, they tremble greatly, they are pained for their pleasant things :
For the house of the priests made stately, and the might in the mouth of the kings.

They are grieved and greatly afraid ; they are taken,
they shall not flee :
For the heart of the nations is made as the strength
of the springs of the sea.

They were fair in the grace of gold, they walked with
delicate feet :
They were clothed with the cunning of old, and the
smell of their garments was sweet.

For the breaking of gold in their hair they halt as a
man made lame :
They are utterly naked and bare ; their mouths are
bitter with shame.

Wilt thou judge thy people now, O king that wast
found most wise ?
Wilt thou lie any more, O thou whose mouth is
emptied of lies ?

Shall God make a pact with thee, till his hook be
found in thy sides ?
Wilt thou put back the time of the sea, or the place
of the season of tides ?

Set a word in thy lips, to stand before God with a
word in thy mouth :
That "the rain shall return in the land, and the
tender dew after drouth."

But the arm of the elders is broken, their strength is
unbound and undone :
They wait for a sign of a token ; they cry, and there
cometh none.

Their moan is in every place, the cry of them filleth
the land :
There is shame in the sight of their face, there is fear
in the thews of their hand.

They are girdled about the reins with a curse for the
girdle thereon :
For the noise of the rending of chains the face of
their colour is gone.

For the sound of the shouting of men they are
grievously stricken at heart :
They are smitten asunder with pain, their bones are
smitten apart.

There is none of them all that is whole ; their lips
gape open for breath ;
They are clothed with sickness of soul, and the shape
of the shadow of death.

The wind is thwart in their feet ; it is full of the
shouting of mirth ;
As one shaketh the sides of a sheet, so it shaketh
the ends of the earth.

The sword, the sword is made keen ; the iron has
opened its mouth ;
The corn is red that was green ; it is bound for the
sheaves of the south.

The sound of a word was shed, the sound of the
wind as a breath,
In the ears of the souls that were dead, in the dust
of the deepness of death ;

Where the face of the moon is taken, the ways of
the stars undone,
The light of the whole sky shaken, the light of the
face of the sun :

Where the waters are emptied and broken, the waves
of the waters are stayed ;
Where God has bound for a token the darkness that
maketh afraid ;

Where the sword was covered and hidden, and dust
had grown in its side,
A word came forth which was bidden, the crying of
one that cried :

The sides of the two-edged sword shall be bare, and
its mouth shall be red,
For the breath of the face of the Lord that is felt in
the bones of the dead.

TO VICTOR HUGO

In the fair days when God
By man as godlike trod,
And each alike was Greek, alike was free,
God's lightning spared, they said,
Alone the happier head
Whose laurels screened it ; fruitless grace for thee,
To whom the high gods gave of right
Their thunders and their laurels and their light.

Sunbeams and bays before
Our master's servants wore,
For these Apollo left in all men's lands ;
But far from these ere now
And watched with jealous brow
Lay the blind lightnings shut between God's hands,
And only loosed on slaves and kings
The terror of the tempest of their wings.

Born in those younger years
That shone with storms of spears
And shook in the wind blown from a dead world's pyre,
When by her back-blown hair
Napoleon caught the fair
And fierce Republic with her feet of fire,

And stayed with iron words and hands
Her flight, and freedom in a thousand lands:

Thou sawest the tides of things
Close over heads of kings,
And thine hand felt the thunder, and to thee
Laurels and lightnings were
As sunbeams and soft air
Mixed each in other, or as mist with sea
Mixed, or as memory with desire,
Or the lute's pulses with the louder lyre.

For thee man's spirit stood
Disrobed of flesh and blood,
And bare the heart of the most secret hours;
And to thine hand more tame
Than birds in winter came
High hopes and unknown flying forms of powers,
And from thy table fed, and sang
Till with the tune men's ears took fire and rang.

Even all men's eyes and ears
With fiery sound and tears
Waxed hot, and cheeks caught flame and eyelid light,
At those high songs of thine
That stung the sense like wine,
Or fell more soft than dew or snow by night,
Or wailed as in some flooded cave
Sobs the strong broken spirit of a wave.

But we, our master, we
Whose hearts, uplift to thee,

Ache with the pulse of thy remembered song,
We ask not nor await
From the clenched hands of fate,
As thou, remission of the world's old wrong ;
Respite we ask not, nor release ;
Freedom a man may have, he shall not peace.

Though thy most fiery hope
Storm heaven, to set wide ope
The all-sought-for gate whence God or Chance debars
All feet of men, all eyes—
The old night resumes her skies,
Her hollow hiding-place of clouds and stars,
Where nought save these is sure in sight ;
And, paven with death, our days are roofed with night.

One thing we can ; to be
Awhile, as men may, free ;
But not by hope or pleasure the most stern
Goddess, most awful-eyed,
Sits, but on either side
Sit sorrow and the wrath of hearts that burn,
Sad faith that cannot hope or fear,
And memory grey with many a flowerless year.

Not that in stranger's wise
I lift not loving eyes
To the fair foster-mother France, that gave
Beyond the pale fleet foam
Help to my sires and home,
Whose great sweet breast could shelter those and save

Whom from her nursing breasts and hands
Their land cast forth of old on gentler lands.

Not without thoughts that ache
For theirs and for thy sake,
I, born of exiles, hail thy banished head;
I whose young song took flight
Toward the great heat and light
On me a child from thy far splendour shed,
From thine high place of soul and song,
Which, fallen on eyes yet feeble, made them strong.

Ah, not with lessening love
For memories born hereof,
I look to that sweet mother-land, and see
The old fields and fair full streams,
And skies, but fled like dreams
The feet of freedom and the thought of thee;
And all between the skies and graves
The mirth of mockers and the shame of slaves.

She, killed with noisome air,
Even she! and still so fair,
Who said "Let there be freedom," and there was
Freedom; and as a lance
The fiery eyes of France
Touched the world's sleep and as a sleep made pass
Forth of men's heavier ears and eyes
Smitten with fire and thunder from new skies.

Are they men's friends indeed
Who watch them weep and bleed?
Because thou hast loved us, shall the gods love thee?

Thou, first of men and friend,
Seest thou, even thou, the end?
Thou knowest what hath been, knowest thou what shall be?
Evils may pass and hopes endure;
But fate is dim, and all the gods obscure.

O nursed in airs apart,
O poet highest of heart,
Hast thou seen time, who hast seen so many things?
Are not the years more wise,
More sad than keenest eyes,
The years with soundless feet and sounding wings?
Passing we hear them not, but past
The clamour of them thrills us, and their blast.

Thou art chief of us, and lord;
Thy song is as a sword
Keen-edged and scented in the blade from flowers;
Thou art lord and king; but we
Lift younger eyes, and see
Less of high hope, less light on wandering hours;
Hours that have borne men down so long,
Seen the right fail, and watched uplift the wrong.

But thine imperial soul,
As years and ruins roll
To the same end, and all things and all dreams
With the same wreck and roar
Drift on the dim same shore,
Still in the bitter foam and brackish streams
Tracks the fresh water-spring to be
And sudden sweeter fountains in the sea.

As once the high God bound
With many a rivet round
Man's saviour, and with iron nailed him through,
At the wild end of things,
Where even his own bird's wings
Flagged, whence the sea shone like a drop of dew,
From Caucasus beheld below
Past fathoms of unfathomable snow ;

So the strong God, the chance
Central of circumstance,
Still shows him exile who will not be slave ;
All thy great fame and thee
Girt by the dim strait sea
With multitudinous walls of wandering wave ;
Shows us our greatest from his throne
Fate-stricken, and rejected of his own.

Yea, he is strong, thou say'st,
A mystery many-faced,
The wild beasts know him and the wild birds flee ;
The blind night sees him, death
Shrinks beaten at his breath,
And his right hand is heavy on the sea :
We know he hath made us, and is king ;
We know not if he care for anything.

Thus much, no more, we know ;
He bade what is be so,
Bade light be and bade night be, one by one ;
Bade hope and fear, bade ill
And good redeem and kill,
Till all men be aweary of the sun
And his world burn in its own flame
And bear no witness longer of his name.

Yet though all this be thus,
Be those men praised of us
Who have loved and wrought and sorrowed and not sinned
For fame or fear or gold,
Nor waxed for winter cold,
Nor changed for changes of the worldly wind ;
Praised above men of men be these,
Till this one world and work we know shall cease.

Yea, one thing more than this,
We know that one thing is,
The splendour of a spirit without blame,
That not the labouring years
Blind-born, nor any fears,
Nor men nor any gods can tire or tame ;
But purer power with fiery breath
Fills, and exalts above the gulfs of death

Praised above men be thou,
Whose laurel-laden brow,
Made for the morning, droops not in the night ;
Praised and beloved, that none
Of all thy great things done
Flies higher than thy most equal spirit's flight ;
Praised, that nor doubt nor hope could bend
Earth's loftiest head, found upright to the end

BEFORE DAWN

Sweet life, if life were stronger,
Earth clear of years that wrong her,
Then two things might live longer,
  Two sweeter things than they ;
Delight, the rootless flower,
And love, the bloomless bower :
Delight that lives an hour,
  And love that lives a day,

From evensong to daytime,
When April melts in Maytime,
Love lengthens out his playtime,
  Love lessens breath by breath,
And kiss by kiss grows older
On listless throat or shoulder
Turned sideways now, turned colder
  Than life that dreams of death.

This one thing once worth giving
Life gave, and seemed worth living ;
Sin sweet beyond forgiving
  And brief beyond regret :
To laugh and love together
And weave with foam and feather
And wind and words the tether
  Our memories play with yet.

Ah, one thing worth beginning,
One thread in life worth spinning,
Ah sweet, one sin worth sinning
With all the whole soul's will;
To lull you till one stilled you,
To kiss you till one killed you,
To feed you till one filled you,
Sweet lips, if love could fill;

To hunt sweet Love and lose him
Between white arms and bosom,
Between the bud and blossom,
Between your throat and chin;
To say of shame—what is it?
Of virtue—we can miss it,
Of sin—we can but kiss it,
And it's no longer sin:

To feel the strong soul, stricken
Through fleshly pulses, quicken
Beneath swift sighs that thicken,
Soft hands and lips that smite;
Lips that no love can tire,
With hands that sting like fire,
Weaving the web Desire
To snare the bird Delight.

But love so lightly plighted,
Our love with torch unlighted,
Paused near us unaffrighted,
Who found and left him free;
None, seeing us cloven in sunder,
Will weep or laugh or wonder;
Light love stands clear of thunder,
And safe from winds at sea.

As, when late larks give warning
Of dying lights and dawning,
Night murmurs to the morning,
"Lie still, O love, lie still;"
And half her dark limbs cover
The white limbs of her lover,
With amorous plumes that hover
And fervent lips that chill;

As scornful day represses
Night's void and vain caresses,
And from her cloudier tresses
Unwinds the gold of his,
With limbs from limbs dividing
And breath by breath subsiding;
For love has no abiding,
But dies before the kiss;

So hath it been, so be it;
For who shall live and flee it?
But look that no man see it
Or hear it unaware;
Lest all who love and choose him
See Love, and so refuse him;
For all who find him lose him,
But all have found him fair.

DOLORES

(NOTRE-DAME DES SEPT DOULEURS)

Cold eyelids that hide like a jewel
Hard eyes that grow soft for an hour ;
The heavy white limbs, and the cruel
Red mouth like a venomous flower ;
When these are gone by with their glories,
What shall rest of thee then, what remain,
O mystic and sombre Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain ?

Seven sorrows the priests give their Virgin ;
But thy sins, which are seventy times seven,
Seven ages would fail thee to purge in,
And then they would haunt thee in heaven :
Fierce midnights and famishing morrows,
And the loves that complete and control
All the joys of the flesh, all the sorrows
That wear out the soul.

O garment not golden but gilded,
O garden where all men may dwell,
O tower not of ivory, but builded
By hands that reach heaven from hell ;

O mystical rose of the mire,
O house not of gold but of gain,
O house of unquenchable fire,
Our Lady of Pain!

O lips full of lust and of laughter,
Curled snakes that are fed from my breast,
Bite hard, lest remembrance come after
And press with new lips where you pressed.
For my heart too springs up at the pressure,
Mine eyelids too moisten and burn;
Ah, feed me and fill me with pleasure,
Ere pain come in turn.

In yesterday's reach and to-morrow's,
Out of sight though they lie of to-day,
There have been and there yet shall be sorrows
That smite not and bite not in play.
The life and the love thou despisest,
These hurt us indeed, and in vain,
O wise among women, and wisest,
Our Lady of Pain.

Who gave thee thy wisdom? what stories
That stung thee, what visions that smote?
Wert thou pure and a maiden, Dolores,
When desire took thee first by the throat?
What bud was the shell of a blossom
That all men may smell to and pluck?
What milk fed thee first at what bosom?
What sins gave thee suck?

We shift and bedeck and bedrape us,
Thou art noble and nude and antique;

Libitina thy mother, Priapus
  Thy father, a Tuscan and Greek.
We play with light loves in the portal,
  And wince and relent and refrain;
Loves die, and we know thee immortal,
  Our Lady of Pain.

Fruits fail and love dies and time ranges;
  Thou art fed with perpetual breath,
And alive after infinite changes,
  And fresh from the kisses of death;
Of languors rekindled and rallied,
  Of barren delights and unclean,
Things monstrous and fruitless, a pallid
  And poisonous queen.

Could you hurt me, sweet lips, though I hurt you?
  Men touch them, and change in a trice
The lilies and languors of virtue
  For the raptures and roses of vice;
Those lie where thy foot on the floor is,
  These crown and caress thee and chain,
O splendid and sterile Dolores,
  Our Lady of Pain.

There are sins it may be to discover,
  There are deeds it may be to delight.
What new work wilt thou find for thy lover,
  What new passions for daytime or night?
What spells that they know not a word of
  Whose lives are as leaves overblown?
What tortures undreamt of, unheard of,
  Unwritten, unknown?

An beautiful passionate body
That never has ached with a heart !
On thy mouth though the kisses are bloody,
Though they sting till it shudder and smart,
More kind than the love we adore is,
They hurt not the heart or the brain,
O bitter and tender Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

As our kisses relax and redouble,
From the lips and the foam and the fangs
Shall no new sin be born for men's trouble,
No dream of impossible pangs ?
With the sweet of the sins of old ages
Wilt thou satiate thy soul as of yore ?
Too sweet is the rind, say the sages,
Too bitter the core.

Hast thou told all thy secrets the last time,
And bared all thy beauties to one ?
Ah, where shall we go then for pastime,
If the worst that can be has been done ?
But sweet as the rind was the core is ;
We are fain of thee still, we are fain,
O sanguine and subtle Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

By the hunger of change and emotion,
By the thirst of unbearable things,
By despair, the twin-born of devotion,
By the pleasure that winces and stings,
The delight that consumes the desire,
The desire that outruns the delight,
By the cruelty deaf as a fire
And blind as the night,

By the ravenous teeth that have smitten
Through the kisses that blossom and bud,
By the lips intertwisted and bitten
Till the foam has a savour of blood,
By the pulse as it rises and falters,
By the hands as they slacken and strain,
I adjure thee, respond from thine altars,
Our Lady of Pain.

Wilt thou smile as a woman disdaining
The light fire in the veins of a boy?
But he comes to thee sad, without feigning,
Who has wearied of sorrow and joy;
Less careful of labour and glory
Than the elders whose hair has uncurled:
And young, but with fancies as hoary
And grey as the world.

I have passed from the outermost portal
To the shrine where a sin is a prayer;
What care though the service be mortal?
O our Lady of Torture, what care?
All thine the last wine that I pour is,
The last in the chalice we drain,
O fierce and luxurious Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

All thine the new wine of desire,
The fruit of four lips as they clung
Till the hair and the eyelids took fire,
The foam of a serpentine tongue,
The froth of the serpents of pleasure,
More salt than the foam of the sea,
Now felt as a flame, now at leisure
As wine shed for me.

Ah thy people, thy children, thy chosen,
Marked cross from the womb and perverse!
They have found out the secret to cozen
The gods that constrain us and curse;
They alone, they are wise, and none other;
Give me place, even me, in their train,
O my sister, my spouse, and my mother,
Our Lady of Pain.

For the crown of our life as it closes
Is darkness, the fruit thereof dust;
No thorns go as deep as a rose's,
And love is more cruel than lust.
Time turns the old days to derision,
Our loves into corpses or wives;
And marriage and death and division
Make barren our lives.

And pale from the past we draw nigh thee,
And satiate with comfortless hours;
And we know thee, how all men belie thee,
And we gather the fruit of thy flowers;
The passion that slays and recovers,
The pangs and the kisses that rain
On the lips and the limbs of thy lovers,
Our Lady of Pain.

The desire of thy furious embraces
Is more than the wisdom of years,
On the blossom though blood lie in traces,
Though the foliage be sodden with tears.
For the lords in whose keeping the door is
That opens on all who draw breath
Gave the cypress to love, my Dolores,
The myrtle to death.

And they laughed, changing hands in the measure.
And they mixed and made peace after strife ;
Pain melted in tears, and was pleasure ;
Death tingled with blood, and was life.
Like lovers they melted and tingled,
In the dusk of thine innermost fane ;
In the darkness they murmured and mingled,
Our Lady of Pain.

In a twilight where virtues are vices,
In thy chapels, unknown of the sun,
To a tune that enthralls and entices,
They were wed, and the twain were as one.
For the tune from thine altar hath sounded
Since God bade the world's work begin,
And the fume of thine incense abounded,
To sweeten the sin.

Love listens, and paler than ashes,
Through his curls as the crown on them slips,
Lifts languid wet eyelids and lashes,
And laughs with insatiable lips.
Thou shalt hush him with heavy caresses,
With music that scares the profane ;
Thou shalt darken his eyes with thy tresses,
Our Lady of Pain.

Thou shalt blind his bright eyes though he wrestle,
Thou shalt chain his light limbs though he strive ;
In his lips all thy serpents shall nestle,
In his hands all thy cruelties thrive.
In the daytime thy voice shall go through him,
In his dreams he shall feel thee and ache ;
Thou shalt kindle by night and subdue him
Asleep and awake.

Thou shalt touch and make redder his roses
With juice not of fruit nor of bud ;
When the sense in the spirit reposes,
Thou shalt quicken the soul through the blood.
Thine, thine the one grace we implore is,
Who would live and not languish or feign,
O sleepless and deadly Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

Dost thou dream, in a respite of slumber,
In a lull of the fires of thy life,
Of the days without name, without number,
When thy will stung the world into strife ;
When, a goddess, the pulse of thy passion
Smote kings as they revelled in Rome ;
And they hailed thee re-risen, O Thalassian,
Foam-white, from the foam ?

When thy lips had such lovers to flatter ;
When the city lay red from thy rods,
And thine hands were as arrows to scatter
The children of change and their gods ;
When the blood of thy foemen made fervent
A sand never moist from the main,
As one smote them, their lord and thy servant,
Our Lady of Pain.

On sands by the storm never shaken,
Nor wet from the washing of tides ;
Nor by foam of the waves overtaken,
Nor winds that the thunder bestrides ;
But red from the print of thy paces,
Made smooth for the world and its lords,
Ringed round with a flame of fair faces,
And splendid with swords.

There the gladiator, pale for thy pleasure,
Drew bitter and perilous breath ;
There torments laid hold on the treasure
Of limbs too delicious for death ;
When thy gardens were lit with live torches ;
When the world was a steed for thy rein ;
When the nations lay prone in thy porches,
Our Lady of Pain.

When, with flame all around him aspirant,
Stood flushed, as a harp-player stands,
The implacable beautiful tyrant,
Rose-crowned, having death in his hands ;
And a sound as the sound of loud water
Smote far through the flight of the fires,
And mixed with the lightning of slaughter
A thunder of lyres.

Dost thou dream of what was and no more is,
The old kingdoms of earth and the kings ?
Dost thou hunger for these things, Dolores,
For these, in a world of new things ?
But thy bosom no fasts could emaciate,
No hunger compel to complain
Those lips that no bloodshed could satiate,
Our Lady of Pain.

As of old when the world's heart was lighter,
Through thy garments the grace of thee glows,
The white wealth of thy body made whiter
By the blushes of amorous blows,
And seamed with sharp lips and fierce fingers,
And branded by kisses that bruise ;
When all shall be gone that now lingers,
Ah, what shall we lose ?

Thou wert fair in the fearless old fashion,
And thy limbs are as melodies yet,
And move to the music of passion
With lithe and lascivious regret.
What ailed us, O gods, to desert you
For creeds that refuse and restrain?
Come down and redeem us from virtue,
Our Lady of Pain.

All shrines that were Vestal are flameless,
But the flame has not fallen from this;
Though obscure be the god, and though nameless
The eyes and the hair that we kiss;
Low fires that love sits by and forges
Fresh heads for his arrows and thine;
Hair loosened and soiled in mid orgies
With kisses and wine.

Thy skin changes country and colour,
And shrivels or swells to a snake's.
Let it brighten and bloat and grow duller,
We know it, the flames and the flakes,
Red brands on it smitten and bitten,
Round skies where a star is a stain,
And the leaves with thy litanies written,
Our Lady of Pain.

On thy bosom though many a kiss be,
There are none such as knew it of old.
Was it Alciphron once or Arisbe,
Male ringlets or feminine gold,
That thy lips met with under the statue,
Whence a look shot out sharp after thieves
From the eyes of the garden-god at you
Across the fig-leaves?

Then still, through dry seasons and moister,
One god had a wreath to his shrine;
Then love was the pearl of his oyster,[1]
And Venus rose red out of wine.
We have all done amiss, choosing rather
Such loves as the wise gods disdain;
Intercede for us thou with thy father,
Our Lady of Pain.

In spring he had crowns of his garden,
Red corn in the heat of the year,
Then hoary green olives that harden
When the grape-blossom freezes with fear;
And milk-budded myrtles with Venus
And vine-leaves with Bacchus he trod;
And ye said, "We have seen, he hath seen us,
A visible God."

What broke off the garlands that girt you?
What sundered you spirit and clay?
Weak sins yet alive are as virtue
To the strength of the sins of that day.
For dried is the blood of thy lover,
Ipsithilla, contracted the vein;
Cry aloud, "Will he rise and recover,
Our Lady of Pain?"

Cry aloud; for the old world is broken:
Cry out; for the Phrygian is priest,
And rears not the bountiful token
And spreads not the fatherly feast.

[1] Nam te præcipuè in suis urbibus colit ora
Hellespontia, cæteris ostreosior oris.
CATULL. *Carm.* xviii.

From the midmost of Ida, from shady
  Recesses that murmur at morn,
They have brought and baptized her, Our Lady,
  A goddess new-born.

And the chaplets of old are above us,
  And the oyster-bed teems out of reach ;
Old poets outsing and outlove us,
  And Catullus makes mouths at our speech.
Who shall kiss, in thy father's own city,
  With such lips as he sang with, again ?
Intercede for us all of thy pity,
  Our Lady of Pain.

Out of Dindymus heavily laden
  Her lions draw bound and unfed
A mother, a mortal, a maiden,
  A queen over death and the dead.
She is cold, and her habit is lowly,
  Her temple of branches and sods ;
Most fruitful and virginal, holy,
  A mother of gods.

She hath wasted with fire thine high places,
  She hath hidden and marred and made sad
The fair limbs of the Loves, the fair faces
  Of gods that were goodly and glad.
She slays, and her hands are not bloody ;
  She moves as a moon in the wane,
White-robed, and thy raiment is ruddy,
  Our Lady of Pain.

They shall pass and their places be taken,
  The gods and the priests that are pure.

They shall pass, and shalt thou not be shaken?
They shall perish, and shalt thou endure?
Death laughs, breathing close and relentless
In the nostrils and eyelids of lust,
With a pinch in his fingers of scentless
And delicate dust.

But the worm shall revive thee with kisses;
Thou shalt change and transmute as a god,
As the rod to a serpent that hisses,
As the serpent again to a rod.
Thy life shall not cease though thou doff it;
Thou shalt live until evil be slain,
And good shall die first, said thy prophet,
Our Lady of Pain.

Did he lie? did he laugh? does he know it,
Now he lies out of reach, out of breath,
Thy prophet, thy preacher, thy poet,
Sin's child by incestuous Death?
Did he find out in fire at his waking,
Or discern as his eyelids lost light,
When the bands of the body were breaking
And all came in sight?

Who has known all the evil before us,
Or the tyrannous secrets of time?
Though we match not the dead men that bore us
At a song, at a kiss, at a crime—
Though the heathen outface and outlive us,
And our lives and our longings are twain—
Ah, forgive us our virtues, forgive us,
Our Lady of Pain.

Who are we that embalm and embrace thee
With spices and savours of song?
What is time, that his children should face thee?
What am I, that my lips do thee wrong?
I could hurt thee—but pain would delight thee;
Or caress thee—but love would repel;
And the lovers whose lips would excite thee
Are serpents in hell.

Who now shall content thee as they did,
Thy lovers, when temples were built
And the hair of the sacrifice braided
And the blood of the sacrifice spilt,
In Lampsacus fervent with faces,
In Aphaca red from thy reign,
Who embraced thee with awful embraces,
Our Lady of Pain?

Where are they, Cotytto or Venus,
Astarte or Ashtaroth, where?
Do their hands as we touch come between us?
Is the breath of them hot in thy hair?
From their lips have thy lips taken fever,
With the blood of their bodies grown red?
Hast thou left upon earth a believer
If these men are dead?

They were purple of raiment and golden,
Filled full of thee, fiery with wine,
Thy lovers, in haunts unbeholden,
In marvellous chambers of thine.
They are fled, and their footprints escape us,
Who appraise thee, adore, and abstain,
O daughter of Death and Priapus,
Our Lady of Pain.

What ails us to fear overmeasure,
To praise thee with timorous breath,
O mistress and mother of pleasure,
The one thing as certain as death?
We shall change as the things that we cherish,
Shall fade as they faded before,
As foam upon water shall perish,
As sand upon shore.

We shall know what the darkness discovers,
If the grave-pit be shallow or deep;
And our fathers of old, and our lovers,
We shall know if they sleep not or sleep.
We shall see whether hell be not heaven,
Find out whether tares be not grain,
And the joys of thee seventy times seven,
Our Lady of Pain.

THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE

HERE, where the world is quiet;
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
In doubtful dreams of dreams;
I watch the green field growing
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest-time and mowing,
A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
And men that laugh and weep;
Of what may come hereafter
For men that sow to reap:
I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers
And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbour,
And far from eye or ear
Wan waves and wet winds labour,
Weak ships and spirits steer;
They drive adrift, and whither
They wot not who make thither;
But no such winds blow hither,
And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,
No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,
Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes
Where no leaf blooms or blushes
Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
In fruitless fields of corn,
They bow themselves and slumber
All night till light is born;
And like a soul belated,
In hell and heaven unmated,
By cloud and mist abated
Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,
He too with death shall dwell,
Nor wake with wings in heaven,
Nor weep for pains in hell;
Though one were fair as roses,
His beauty clouds and closes;
And well though love reposes,
In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold immortal hands;
Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her
To men that mix and meet her
From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
She waits for all men born:
Forgets the earth her mother,
The life of fruits and corn;
And spring and seed and swallow
Take wing for her and follow
Where summer song rings hollow
And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,
The old loves with wearier wings;
And all dead years draw thither,
And all disastrous things;
Dead dreams of days forsaken,
Blind buds that snows have shaken,
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow,
And joy was never sure;
To-day will die to-morrow;
Time stoops to no man's lure;
And love, grown faint and fretful,
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
  Nor any change of light :
Nor sound of waters shaken,
  Nor any sound or sight :
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal ;
Only the sleep eternal
  In an eternal night.

HESPERIA

Out of the golden remote wild west where the sea without shore is,
Full of the sunset, and sad, if at all, with the fulness of joy,
As a wind sets in with the autumn that blows from the region of stories,
Blows with a perfume of songs and of memories beloved from a boy,
Blows from the capes of the past oversea to the bays of the present,
Filled as with shadow of sound with the pulse of invisible feet,
Far out to the shallows and straits of the future, by rough ways or pleasant,
Is it thither the wind's wings beat? is it hither to me, O my sweet?
For thee, in the stream of the deep tide-wind blowing in with the water,
Thee I behold as a bird borne in with the wind from the west,
Straight from the sunset, across white waves whence rose as a daughter
Venus thy mother, in years when the world was a water at rest.

Out of the distance of dreams, as a dream that abides
after slumber,
Strayed from the fugitive flock of the night, when
the moon overhead
Wanes in the wan waste heights of the heaven, and
stars without number
Die without sound, and are spent like lamps that
are burnt by the dead,
Comes back to me, stays by me, lulls me with touch
of forgotten caresses,
One warm dream clad about with a fire as of life
that endures ;
The delight of thy face, and the sound of thy feet,
and the wind of thy tresses,
And all of a man that regrets, and all of a maid
that allures.
But thy bosom is warm for my face and profound as
a manifold flower,
Thy silence as music, thy voice as an odour that
fades in a flame ;
Not a dream, not a dream is the kiss of thy mouth,
and the bountiful hour
That makes me forget what was sin, and would
make me forget were it shame.
Thine eyes that are quiet, thine hands that are tender,
thy lips that are loving,
Comfort and cool me as dew in the dawn of a moon
like a dream ;
And my heart yearns baffled and blind, moved vainly
toward thee, and moving
As the refluent seaweed moves in the languid exube-
rant stream,
Fair as a rose is on earth, as a rose under water in
prison,

That stretches and swings to the slow passionate
pulse of the sea,
Closed up from the air and the sun, but alive, as a
ghost rearisen,
Pale as the love that revives as a ghost rearisen
in me,
From the bountiful infinite west, from the happy
memorial places
Full of the stately repose and the lordly delight of
the dead,
Where the fortunate islands are lit with the light of
ineffable faces,
And the sound of a sea without wind is about them,
and sunset is red,
Come back to redeem and release me from love that
recalls and represses,
That cleaves to my flesh as a flame, till the serpent
has eaten his fill;
From the bitter delights of the dark, and the feverish,
the furtive caresses
That murder the youth in a man or ever his heart
have its will.
Thy lips cannot laugh and thine eyes cannot weep;
thou art pale as a rose is,
Paler and sweeter than leaves that cover the blush
of the bud;
And the heart of the flower is compassion, and pity
the core it encloses,
Pity, not love, that is born of the breath and decays
with the blood.
As the cross that a wild nun clasps till the edge of it
bruises her bosom,
So love wounds as we grasp it, and blackens and
burns as a flame;

I have loved overmuch in my life ; when the live bud bursts with the blossom,
Bitter as ashes or tears is the fruit, and the wine thereof shame.
As a heart that its anguish divides is the green bud cloven asunder ;
As the blood of a man self-slain is the flush of the leaves that allure ;
And the perfume as poison and wine to the brain, a delight and a wonder ;
And the thorns are too sharp for a boy, too slight for a man; to endure.
Too soon did I love it, and lost love's rose ; and I cared not for glory's :
Only the blossoms of sleep and of pleasure were mixed in my hair.
Was it myrtle or poppy thy garland was woven with, O my Dolores ?
Was it pallor of slumber, or blush as of blood, that I found in thee fair ?
For desire is a respite from love, and the flesh not the heart is her fuel ;
She was sweet to me once, who am fled and escaped from the rage of her reign ;
Who behold as of old time at hand as I turn, with her mouth growing cruel,
And flushed as with wine with the blood of her lovers, Our Lady of Pain.
Low down where the thicket is thicker with thorns than with leaves in the summer,
In the brake is a gleaming of eyes and a hissing of tongues that I knew ;
And the lithe long throats of her snakes reach round her, their mouths overcome her,

And her lips grow cool with their foam, made moist as a desert with dew.
With the thirst and the hunger of lust though her beautiful lips be so bitter,
With the cold foul foam of the snakes they soften and redden and smile ;
And her fierce mouth sweetens, her eyes wax wide and her eyelashes glitter,
And she laughs with a savour of blood in her face, and a savour of guile.
She laughs, and her hands reach hither, her hair blows hither and hisses,
As a low-lit flame in a wind, back-blown till it shudder and leap ;
Let her lips not again lay hold on my soul, nor her poisonous kisses,
To consume it alive and divide from thy bosom, Our Lady of Sleep.
Ah daughter of sunset and slumber, if now it return into prison,
Who shall redeem it anew? but we, if thou wilt, let us fly ;
Let us take to us, now that the white skies thrill with a moon unarisen,
Swift horses of fear or of love, take flight and depart and not die.
They are swifter than dreams, they are stronger than death ; there is none that hath ridden,
None that shall ride in the dim strange ways of his life as we ride ;
By the meadows of memory, the highlands of hope, and the shore that is hidden,
Where life breaks loud and unseen, a sonorous invisible tide ;

By the sands where sorrow has trodden, the salt pools bitter and sterile,
By the thundering reef and the low sea-wall and the channel of years,
Our wild steeds press on the night, strain hard through pleasure and peril,
Labour and listen and pant not or pause for the peril that nears ;
And the sound of them trampling the way cleaves night as an arrow asunder,
And slow by the sand-hill and swift by the down with its glimpses of grass,
Sudden and steady the music, as eight hoofs trample and thunder,
Rings in the ear of the low blind wind of the night as we pass ;
Shrill shrieks in our faces the blind bland air that was mute as a maiden,
Stung into storm by the speed of our passage, and deaf where we past ;
And our spirits too burn as we bound, thine holy but mine heavy-laden,
As we burn with the fire of our flight ; ah love, shall we win at the last?

LOVE AT SEA

We are in love's land to-day ;
Where shall we go ?
Love, shall we start or stay,
Or sail or row ?
There's many a wind and way,
And never a May but May ;
We are in love's hand to-day ;
Where shall we go ?

Our landwind is the breath
Of sorrows kissed to death
And joys that were ;
Our ballast is a rose ;
Our way lies where God knows
And love knows where.
We are in love's hand to-day—

Our seamen are fledged Loves,
Our masts are bills of doves,
Our decks fine gold ;
Our ropes are dead maids' hair,
Our stores are love-shafts fair
And manifold.
We are in love's land to-day—

Where shall we land you, sweet?
On fields of strange men's feet,
    Or fields near home?
Or where the fire-flowers blow,
Or where the flowers of snow
    Or flowers of foam?
        We are in love's hand to-day—

Land me, she says, where love
Shows but one shaft, one dove,
    One heart, one hand.
—A shore like that, my dear,
Lies where no man will steer,
    No maiden land.

Imitated from Théophile Gautier.

APRIL

FROM THE FRENCH OF THE VIDAME DE CHARTRES

12— ?

When the fields catch flower
And the underwood is green,
And from bower unto bower
The songs of the birds begin,
I sing with sighing between.
When I laugh and sing,
I am heavy at heart for my sin ;
I am sad in the spring
For my love that I shall not win,
For a foolish thing.

This profit I have of my woe,
That I know, as I sing,
I know he will needs have it so
Who is master and king,
Who is lord of the spirit of spring.
I will serve her and will not spare
Till her pity awake
Who is good, who is pure, who is fair,
Even her for whose sake
Love hath ta'en me and slain unaware.

O my lord, O Love,
I have laid my life at thy feet;
Have thy will thereof,
Do as it please thee with it,
For what shall please thee is sweet.
I am come unto thee
To do thee service, O Love;
Yet cannot I see
Thou wilt take any pity thereof,
Any mercy on me.

But the grace I have long time sought
Comes never in sight,
If in her it abideth not,
Through thy mercy and might,
Whose heart is the world's delight.
Thou hast sworn without fail I shall die.
For my heart is set
On what hurts me, I wot not why,
But cannot forget
What I love, what I sing for and sigh.

She is worthy of praise,
For this grief of her giving is worth
All the joy of my days
That lie between death's day and birth.
All the lordship of things upon earth.
Nay, what have I said?
I would not be glad if I could;
My dream and my dread
Are of her, and for her sake I would
That my life were fled.

Lo, sweet, if I durst not pray to you,
  Then were I dead ;
If I sang not a little to say to you,
  (Could it be said)
  O my love, how my heart would be fed !
Ah sweet who hast hold of my heart,
  For thy love's sake I live,
Do but tell me, ere either depart,
  What a lover may give
For a woman so fair as thou art.

The lovers that disbelieve,
  False rumours shall grieve
And evil-speaking shall part.

BEFORE PARTING

A MONTH or twain to live on honeycomb
Is pleasant ; but one tires of scented time,
Cold sweet recurrence of accepted rhyme,
And that strong purple under juice and foam
Where the wine's heart has burst ;
Nor feel the latter kisses like the first.

Once yet, this poor one time ; I will not pray
Even to change the bitterness of it,
The bitter taste ensuing on the sweet,
To make your tears fall where your soft hair lay
All blurred and heavy in some perfumed wise
Over my face and eyes.

And yet who knows what end the scythèd wheat
Makes of its foolish poppies' mouths of red ?
These were not sown, these are not harvested,
They grow a month and are cast under feet
And none has care thereof,
As none has care of a divided love.

I know each shadow of your lips by rote,
Each change of love in eyelids and eyebrows ;
The fashion of fair temples tremulous

With tender blood, and colour of your throat ;
I know not how love is gone out of this,
Seeing that all was his.

Love's likeness there endures upon all these :
But out of these one shall not gather love.
Day hath not strength nor the night shade enough
To make love whole and fill his lips with ease,
As some bee-builded cell
Feels at filled lips the heavy honey swell.

I know not how this last month leaves your hair
Less full of purple colour and hid spice,
And that luxurious trouble of closed eyes
Is mixed with meaner shadow and waste care ;
And love, kissed out by pleasure, seems not yet
Worth patience to regret.

THE SUNDEW

A LITTLE marsh-plant, yellow green,
And pricked at lip with tender red.
Tread close, and either way you tread
Some faint black water jets between
Lest you should bruise the curious head.

A live thing maybe ; who shall know ?
The summer knows and suffers it ;
For the cool moss is thick and sweet
Each side, and saves the blossom so
That it lives out the long June heat.

The deep scent of the heather burns
About it ; breathless though it be,
Bow down and worship ; more than we
Is the least flower whose life returns,
Least weed renascent in the sea.

We are vexed and cumbered in earth's sight
With wants, with many memories ;
These see their mother what she is,
Glad-growing, till August leave more bright
The apple-coloured cranberries.

Wind blows and bleaches the strong grass.
Blown all one way to shelter it
From trample of strayed kine, with feet
Felt heavier than the moorhen was,
Strayed up past patches of wild wheat.

You call it sundew : how it grows,
If with its colour it have breath,
If life taste sweet to it, if death
Pain its soft petal, no man knows :
Man has no sight or sense that saith.

My sundew, grown of gentle days,
In these green miles the spring begun
Thy growth ere April had half done
With the soft secret of her ways
Or June made ready for the sun.

O red-lipped mouth of marsh-flower,
I have a secret halved with thee.
The name that is love's name to me
Thou knowest, and the face of her
Who is my festival to see.

The hard sun, as thy petals knew,
Coloured the heavy moss-water :
Thou wert not worth green midsummer
Nor fit to live to August blue,
O sundew, not remembering her.

FÉLISE

Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

What shall be said between us here
  Among the downs, between the trees,
In fields that knew our feet last year,
  In sight of quiet sands and seas,
  This year, Félise?

Who knows what word were best to say?
  For last year's leaves lie dead and red
On this sweet day, in this green May,
  And barren corn makes bitter bread.
  What shall be said?

Here as last year the fields begin,
  A fire of flowers and glowing grass;
The old fields we laughed and lingered in,
  Seeing each our souls in last year's glass,
  Félise, alas!

Shall we not laugh, shall we not weep,
  Not we, though this be as it is?
For love awake or love asleep
  Ends in a laugh, a dream, a kiss,
  A song like this.

I that have slept awake, and you
Sleep, who last year were well awake.
Though love do all that love can do,
My heart will never ache or break
For your heart's sake.

The great sea, faultless as a flower,
Throbs, trembling under beam and breeze,
And laughs with love of the amorous hour.
I found you fairer once, Félise,
Than flowers or seas.

We played at bondsman and at queen;
But as the days change men change too:
I find the grey sea's notes of green,
The green sea's fervent flakes of blue,
More fair than you.

Your beauty is not over fair
Now in mine eyes, who am grown up wise.
The smell of flowers in all your hair
Allures not now; no sigh replies
If your heart sighs.

But you sigh seldom, you sleep sound,
You find love's new name good enough.
Less sweet I find it than I found
The sweetest name that ever love
Grew weary of.

My snake with bright bland eyes, my snake
Grown tame and glad to be caressed,
With lips athirst for mine to slake
Their tender fever! who had guessed
You loved me best?

I had died for this last year, to know
You loved me. Who shall turn on fate?
I care not if love come or go
Now, though your love seek mine for mate.
It is too late.

The dust of many strange desires
Lies deep between us; in our eyes
Dead smoke of perishable fires
Flickers, a fume in air and skies,
A steam of sighs.

You loved me and you loved me not;
A little, much, and overmuch.
Will you forget as I forgot?
Let all dead things lie dead; none such
Are soft to touch.

I love you and I do not love,
Too much, a little, not at all;
Too much, and never yet enough.
Birds quick to fledge and fly at call
Are quick to fall.

And these love longer now than men,
And larger loves than ours are these.
No diver brings up love again
Dropped once, my beautiful Félise,
In such cold seas.

Gone deeper than all plummets sound,
Where in the dim green dayless day
The life of such dead things lies bound
As the sea feeds on, wreck and stray
And castaway.

Can I forget? yea, that can I,
And that can all men; so will you,
Alive, or later, when you die.
Ah, but the love you plead was true?
Was mine not too?

I loved you for that name of yours
Long ere we met, and long enough.
Now that one thing of all endures—
The sweetest name that ever love
Waxed weary of.

Like colours in the sea, like flowers,
Like a cat's splendid circled eyes
That wax and wane with love for hours,
Green as green flame, blue-grey like skies,
And soft like sighs—

And all these only like your name,
And your name full of all of these.
I say it, and it sounds the same—
Save that I say it now at ease,
Your name, Félise.

I said "she must be swift and white,
And subtly warm, and half perverse,
And sweet like sharp soft fruit to bite,
And like a snake's love lithe and fierce."
Men have guessed worse.

What was the song I made of you
Here where the grass forgets our feet
As afternoon forgets the dew?
Ah that such sweet things should be fleet,
Such fleet things sweet!

As afternoon forgets the dew,
  As time in time forgets all men,
As our old place forgets us two,
  Who might have turned to one thing then.
  But not again.

O lips that mine have grown into
  Like April's kissing May,
O fervent eyelids letting through
Those eyes the greenest of things blue,
  The bluest of things grey,

If you were I and I were you,
  How could I love you, say?
How could the roseleaf love the rue,
The day love nightfall and her dew,
  Though night may love the day?

You loved it may be more than I;
  We know not; love is hard to seize,
And all things are not good to try;
  And lifelong loves the worst of these
  For us, Félise.

Ah, take the season and have done,
  Love well the hour and let it go:
Two souls may sleep and wake up one,
  Or dream they wake and find it so,
  And then—you know.

Kiss me once hard as though a flame
  Lay on my lips and made them fire;
The same lips now, and not the same;
  What breath shall fill and re-inspire
  A dead desire?

The old song sounds hollower in mine ear
Than thin keen sounds of dead men's speech—
A noise one hears and would not hear;
Too strong to die, too weak to reach
From wave to beach.

We stand on either side the sea,
Stretch hands, blow kisses, laugh and lean
I toward you, you toward me;
But what hears either save the keen
Grey sea between?

A year divides us, love from love,
Though you love now, though I loved then
The gulf is strait, but deep enough;
Who shall recross, who among men
Shall cross again?

Love was a jest last year, you said,
And what lives surely, surely dies.
Even so; but now that love is dead,
Shall love rekindle from wet eyes,
From subtle sighs?

For many loves are good to see;
Mutable loves, and loves perverse;
But there is nothing, nor shall be,
So sweet, so wicked, but my verse
Can dream of worse.

For we that sing and you that love
Know that which man may, only we.
The rest live under us; above,
Live the great gods in heaven, and see
What things shall be.

So this thing is and must be so ;
For man dies, and love also dies.
Though yet love's ghost moves to and fro
The sea-green mirrors of your eyes,
And laughs, and lies.

Eyes coloured like a water-flower,
And deeper than the green sea's glass ;
Eyes that remember one sweet hour—
In vain we swore it should not pass ;
In vain, alas !

Ah my Félise, if love or sin,
If shame or fear could hold it fast,
Should we not hold it ? Love wears thin,
And they laugh well who laugh the last.
Is it not past ?

The gods, the gods are stronger ; time
Falls down before them, all men's knees
Bow, all men's prayers and sorrows climb
Like incense towards them ; yea, for these
Are gods, Félise.

Immortal are they, clothed with powers,
Not to be comforted at all ;
Lords over all the fruitless hours ;
Too great to appease, too high to appal,
Too far to call.

For none shall move the most high gods,
Who are most sad, being cruel ; none
Shall break or take away the rods
Wherewith they scourge us, not as one
That smites a son.

By many a name of many a creed
We have called upon them, since the sands
Fell through time's hour-glass first, a seed
Of life; and out of many lands
Have we stretched hands.

When have they heard us? who hath known
Their faces, climbed unto their feet,
Felt them and found them? Laugh or groan,
Doth heaven remurmur and repeat
Sad sounds or sweet?

Do the stars answer? in the night
Have ye found comfort? or by day
Have ye seen gods? What hope, what light,
Falls from the farthest starriest way
On you that pray?

Are the skies wet because we weep,
Or fair because of any mirth?
Cry out; they are gods; perchance they sleep;
Cry; thou shalt know what prayers are worth,
Thou dust and earth.

O earth, thou art fair; O dust, thou art great;
O laughing lips and lips that mourn,
Pray, till ye feel the exceeding weight
Of God's intolerable scorn,
Not to be borne.

Behold, there is no grief like this;
The barren blossom of thy prayer,
Thou shalt find out how sweet it is.
O fools and blind, what seek ye there,
High up in the air?

Ye must have gods, the friends of men,
Merciful gods, compassionate,
And these shall answer you again.
Will ye beat always at the gate,
Ye fools of fate?

Ye fools and blind; for this is sure,
That all ye shall not live, but die.
Lo, what thing have ye found endure?
Or what thing have ye found on high
Past the blind sky?

The ghosts of words and dusty dreams,
Old memories, faiths infirm and dead.
Ye fools; for which among you deems
His prayer can alter green to red
Or stones to bread?

Why should ye bear with hopes and fears
Till all these things be drawn in one,
The sound of iron-footed years,
And all the oppression that is done
Under the sun?

Ye might end surely, surely pass
Out of the multitude of things,
Under the dust, beneath the grass,
Deep in dim death, where no thought stings,
No record clings.

No memory more of love or hate,
No trouble, nothing that aspires,
No sleepless labour thwarting fate,
And thwarted; where no travail tires,
Where no faith fires.

All passes, nought that has been is,
Things good and evil have one end.
Can anything be otherwise
Though all men swear all things would mend
With God to friend?

Can ye beat off one wave with prayer,
Can ye move mountains? bid the flower
Take flight and turn to a bird in the air?
Can ye hold fast for shine or shower
One wingless hour?

Ah sweet, and we too, can we bring
One sigh back, bid one smile revive?
Can God restore one ruined thing,
Or he who slays our souls alive
Make dead things thrive?

Two gifts perforce he has given us yet,
Though sad things stay and glad things fly;
Two gifts he has given us, to forget
All glad and sad things that go by,
And then to die.

We know not whether death be good,
But life at least it will not be:
Men will stand saddening as we stood,
Watch the same fields and skies as we
And the same sea.

Let this be said between us here,
One love grows green when one turns grey;
This year knows nothing of last year;
To-morrow has no more to say
To yesterday.

Live and let live, as I will do,
Love and let love, and so will I.
But, sweet, for me no more with you:
Not while I live, not though I die.
Goodnight, goodbye.

AN INTERLUDE

In the greenest growth of the Maytime,
I rode where the woods were wet,
Between the dawn and the daytime;
The spring was glad that we met.

There was something the season wanted,
Though the ways and the woods smelt sweet;
The breath at your lips that panted,
The pulse of the grass at your feet.

You came, and the sun came after,
And the green grew golden above;
And the flag-flowers lightened with laughter,
And the meadow-sweet shook with love.

Your feet in the full-grown grasses
Moved soft as a weak wind blows;
You passed me as April passes,
With face made out of a rose.

By the stream where the stems were slender,
Your bright foot paused at the sedge;
It might be to watch the tender
Light leaves in the springtime hedge,

On boughs that the sweet month blanches
With flowery frost of May:
It might be a bird in the branches,
It might be a thorn in the way.

I waited to watch you linger
With foot drawn back from the dew,
Till a sunbeam straight like a finger
Struck sharp through the leaves at you.

And a bird overhead sang *Follow*,
And a bird to the right sang *Here*;
And the arch of the leaves was hollow,
And the meaning of May was clear.

I saw where the sun's hand pointed,
I knew what the bird's note said;
By the dawn and the dewfall anointed,
You were queen by the gold on your head.

As the glimpse of a burnt-out ember
Recalls a regret of the sun,
I remember, forget, and remember
What Love saw done and undone.

I remember the way we parted,
The day and the way we met;
You hoped we were both broken-hearted,
And knew we should both forget.

And May with her world in flower
Seemed still to murmur and smile
As you murmured and smiled for an hour;
I saw you turn at the stile.

A hand like a white wood-blossom
  You lifted, and waved, and passed,
With head hung down to the bosom,
  And pale, as it seemed, at last.

And the best and the worst of this is
  That neither is most to blame
If you've forgotten my kisses
  And I've forgotten your name.

HENDECASYLLABICS

In the month of the long decline of roses
I, beholding the summer dead before me,
Set my face to the sea and journeyed silent,
Gazing eagerly where above the sea-mark
Flame as fierce as the fervid eyes of lions
Half divided the eyelids of the sunset ;
Till I heard as it were a noise of waters
Moving tremulous under feet of angels
Multitudinous, out of all the heavens ;
Knew the fluttering wind, the fluttered foliage,
Shaken fitfully, full of sound and shadow ;
And saw, trodden upon by noiseless angels,
Long mysterious reaches fed with moonlight,
Sweet sad straits in a soft subsiding channel,
Blown about by the lips of winds I knew not,
Winds not born in the north nor any quarter,
Winds not warm with the south nor any sunshine ;
Heard between them a voice of exultation,
" Lo, the summer is dead, the sun is faded,
Even like as a leaf the year is withered,
All the fruits of the day from all her branches
Gathered, neither is any left to gather.
All the flowers are dead, the tender blossoms,
All are taken away ; the season wasted,
Like an ember among the fallen ashes.

Now with light of the winter days, with moonlight,
Light of snow, and the bitter light of hoarfrost,
We bring flowers that fade not after autumn,
Pale white chaplets and crowns of latter seasons,
Fair false leaves (but the summer leaves were falser),
Woven under the eyes of stars and planets
When low light was upon the windy reaches
Where the flower of foam was blown, a lily
Dropt among the sonorous fruitless furrows
And green fields of the sea that make no pasture:
Since the winter begins, the weeping winter,
All whose flowers are tears, and round his temples
Iron blossom of frost is bound for ever."

SAPPHICS

All the night sleep came not upon my eyelids,
Shed not dew, nor shook nor unclosed a feather,
Yet with lips shut close and with eyes of iron
Stood and beheld me.

Then to me so lying awake a vision
Came without sleep over the seas and touched me,
Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I too,
Full of the vision,

Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,
Saw the hair unbound and the feet unsandalled
Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;
Saw the reluctant

Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her,
Looking always, looking with necks reverted,
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder
Shone Mitylene;

Heard the flying feet of the Loves behind her
Make a sudden thunder upon the waters,
As the thunder flung from the strong unclosing
Wings of a great wind.

So the goddess fled from her place, with awful
Sound of feet and thunder of wings around her;
While behind a clamour of singing women
Severed the twilight.

Ah the singing, ah the delight, the passion!
All the Loves wept, listening; sick with anguish,
Stood the crowned nine Muses about Apollo;
Fear was upon them,

While the tenth sang wonderful things they knew not.
Ah the tenth, the Lesbian! the nine were silent,
None endured the sound of her song for weeping;
Laurel by laurel,

Faded all their crowns; but about her forehead,
Round her woven tresses and ashen temples
White as dead snow, paler than grass in summer,
Ravaged with kisses,

Shone a light of fire as a crown for ever.
Yea, almost the implacable Aphrodite
Paused, and almost wept; such a song was that song.
Yea, by her name too

Called her, saying, "Turn to me, O my Sappho;"
Yet she turned her face from the Loves, she saw not
Tears for laughter darken immortal eyelids,
Heard not about her

Fearful fitful wings of the doves departing,
Saw not how the bosom of Aphrodite
Shook with weeping, saw not her shaken raiment,
Saw not her hands wrung;

Saw the Lesbians kissing across their smitten
Lutes with lips more sweet than the sound of lute-
strings,
Mouth to mouth and hand upon hand, her chosen,
Fairer than all men ;

Only saw the beautiful lips and fingers,
Full of songs and kisses and little whispers,
Full of music ; only beheld among them
Soar, as a bird soars

Newly fledged, her visible song, a marvel,
Made of perfect sound and exceeding passion,
Sweetly shapen, terrible, full of thunders,
Clothed with the wind's wings.

Then rejoiced she, laughing with love, and scattered
Roses, awful roses of holy blossom ;
Then the Loves thronged sadly with hidden faces
Round Aphrodite,

Then the Muses, stricken at heart, were silent ;
Yea, the gods waxed pale ; such a song was that song.
All reluctant, all with a fresh repulsion,
Fled from before her.

All withdrew long since, and the land was barren,
Full of fruitless women and music only.
Now perchance, when winds are assuaged at sunset,
Lulled at the dewfall,

By the grey sea-side, unassuaged, unheard of,
Unbeloved, unseen in the ebb of twilight,
Ghosts of outcast women return lamenting,
Purged not in Lethe,

Clothed about with flame and with tears, and singing
Songs that move the heart of the shaken heaven,
Songs that break the heart of the earth with pity,
Hearing, to hear them.

AT ELEUSIS

Men of Eleusis, ye that with long staves
Sit in the market-houses, and speak words
Made sweet with wisdom as the rare wine is
Thickened with honey ; and ye sons of these
Who in the glad thick streets go up and down
For pastime or grave traffic or mere chance ;
And all fair women having rings of gold
On hands or hair ; and chiefest over these
I name you, daughters of this man the king,
Who dipping deep smooth pitchers of pure brass
Under the bubbled wells, till each round lip
Stooped with loose gurgle of waters incoming,
Found me an old sick woman, lamed and lean,
Beside a growth of builded olive-boughs
Whence multiplied thick song of thick-plumed
throats—
Also wet tears filled up my hollow hands
By reason of my crying into them—
And pitied me ; for as cold water ran
And washed the pitchers full from lip to lip,
So washed both eyes full the strong salt of tears.
And ye put water to my mouth, made sweet
With brown hill-berries ; so in time I spoke
And gathered my loose knees from under me.
Moreover in the broad fair halls this month

Have I found space and bountiful abode
To please me. I Demeter speak of this,
Who am the mother and the mate of things :
For as ill men by drugs or singing words
Shut the doors inward of the narrowed womb
Like a lock bolted with round iron through,
Thus I shut up the body and sweet mouth
Of all soft pasture and the tender land,
So that no seed can enter in by it
Though one sow thickly, nor some grain get out
Past the hard clods men cleave and bite with steel
To widen the sealed lips of them for use.
None of you is there in the peopled street
But knows how all the dry-drawn furrows ache
With no green spot made count of in the black :
How the wind finds no comfortable grass
Nor is assuaged with bud nor breath of herbs ;
And in hot autumn when ye house the stacks,
All fields are helpless in the sun, all trees
Stand as a man stripped out of all but skin.
Nevertheless ye sick have help to get
By means and stablished ordinance of God ;
For God is wiser than a good man is.
But never shall new grass be sweet in earth
Till I get righted of my wound and wrong
By changing counsel of ill-minded Zeus.
For of all other gods is none save me
Clothed with like power to build and break the year.
I make the lesser green begin, when spring
Touches not earth but with one fearful foot ;
And as a careful gilder with grave art
Soberly colours and completes the face,
Mouth, chin and all, of some sweet work in stone,
I carve the shapes of grass and tender corn

And colour the ripe edges and long spikes
With the red increase and the grace of gold.
No tradesman in soft wools is cunninger
To kill the secret of the fat white fleece
With stains of blue and purple wrought in it.
Three moons were made and three moons burnt away
While I held journey hither out of Crete
Comfortless, tended by grave Hecate
Whom my wound stung with double iron point;
For all my face was like a cloth wrung out
With close and weeping wrinkles, and both lids
Sodden with salt continuance of tears.
For Hades and the sidelong will of Zeus
And that lame wisdom that has writhen feet,
Cunning, begotten in the bed of Shame,
These three took evil will at me, and made
Such counsel that when time got wing to fly
This Hades out of summer and low fields
Forced the bright body of Persephone:
Out of pure grass, where she lying down, red flowers
Made their sharp little shadows on her sides,
Pale heat, pale colour on pale maiden flesh—
And chill water slid over her reddening feet,
Killing the throbs in their soft blood; and birds,
Perched next her elbow and pecking at her hair,
Stretched their necks more to see her than even to sing.
A sharp thing is it I have need to say;
For Hades holding both white wrists of hers
Unloosed the girdle and with knot by knot
Bound her between his wheels upon the seat,
Bound her pure body, holiest yet and dear
To me and God as always, clothed about

With blossoms loosened as her knees went down,
Let fall as she let go of this and this
By tens and twenties, tumbled to her feet,
White waifs or purple of the pasturage.
Therefore with only going up and down
My feet were wasted, and the gracious air,
To me discomfortable and dun, became
As weak smoke blowing in the under world.
And finding in the process of ill days
What part had Zeus herein, and how as mate
He coped with Hades, yokefellow in sin,
I set my lips against the meat of gods
And drank not neither ate or slept in heaven.
Nor in the golden greeting of their mouths
Did ear take note of me, nor eye at all
Track my feet going in the ways of them.
Like a great fire on some strait slip of land
Between two washing inlets of wet sea
That burns the grass up to each lip of beach
And strengthens, waxing in the growth of wind,
So burnt my soul in me at heaven and earth,
Each way a ruin and a hungry plague,
Visible evil; nor could any night
Put cool between mine eyelids, nor the sun
With competence of gold fill out my want.
Yea so my flame burnt up the grass and stones,
Shone to the salt-white edges of thin sea,
Distempered all the gracious work, and made
Sick change, unseasonable increase of days
And scant avail of seasons; for by this
The fair gods faint in hollow heaven: there comes
No taste of burnings of the twofold fat
To leave their palates smooth, nor in their lips
Soft rings of smoke and weak scent wandering;

All cattle waste and rot, and their ill smell
Grows alway from the lank unsavoury flesh
That no man slays for offering ; the sea
And waters moved beneath the heath and corn
Preserve the people of fin-twinkling fish,
And river-flies feed thick upon the smooth ;
But all earth over is no man or bird
(Except the sweet race of the kingfisher)
That lacks not and is wearied with much loss.
Meantime the purple inward of the house
Was softened with all grace of scent and sound
In ear and nostril perfecting my praise ;
Faint grape-flowers and cloven honey-cake
And the just grain with dues of the shed salt
Made me content : yet my hand loosened not
Its gripe upon your harvest all year long.
While I, thus woman-muffled in wan flesh
And waste externals of a perished face,
Preserved the levels of my wrath and love
Patiently ruled ; and with soft offices
Cooled the sharp noons and busied the warm nights
In care of this my choice, this child my choice,
Triptolemus, the king's selected son :
That this fair yearlong body, which hath grown
Strong with strange milk upon the mortal lip
And nerved with half a god, might so increase
Outside the bulk and the bare scope of man :
And waxen over large to hold within
Base breath of yours and this impoverished air,
I might exalt him past the flame of stars,
The limit and walled reach of the great world.
Therefore my breast made common to his mouth
Immortal savours, and the taste whereat
Twice their hard life strains out the coloured veins

And twice its brain confirms the narrow shell.
Also at night, unwinding cloth from cloth
As who unhusks an almond to the white
And pastures curiously the purer taste,
I bared the gracious limbs and the soft feet,
Unswaddled the weak hands, and in mid ash
Laid the sweet flesh of either feeble side,
More tender for impressure of some touch
Than wax to any pen ; and lit around
Fire, and made crawl the white worm-shapen flame,
And leap in little angers spark by spark
At head at once and feet ; and the faint hair
Hissed with rare sprinkles in the closer curl,
And like scaled oarage of a keen thin fish
In sea-water, so in pure fire his feet
Struck out, and the flame bit not in his flesh,
But like a kiss it curled his lip, and heat
Fluttered his eyelids ; so each night I blew
The hot ash red to purge him to full god.
Ill is it when fear hungers in the soul
For painful food, and chokes thereon, being fed ;
And ill slant eyes interpret the straight sun,
But in their scope its white is wried to black :
By the queen Metaneira mean I this ;
For with sick wrath upon her lips, and heart
Narrowing with fear the spleenful passages,
She thought to thread this web's fine ravel out,
Nor leave her shuttle split in combing it ;
Therefore she stole on us, and with hard sight
Peered, and stooped close ; then with pale open
mouth
As the fire smote her in the eyes between
Cried, and the child's laugh, sharply shortening
As fire doth under rain, fell off ; the flame

Writhed once all through and died, and in thick dark
Tears fell from mine on the child's weeping eyes,
Eyes dispossessed of strong inheritance
And mortal fallen anew. Who not the less
From bud of beard to pale-grey flower of hair
Shall wax vinewise to a lordly vine, whose grapes
Bleed the red heavy blood of swoln soft wine,
Subtle with sharp leaves' intricacy, until
Full of white years and blossom of hoary days
I take him perfected ; for whose one sake
I am thus gracious to the least who stands
Filleted with white wool and girt upon
As he whose prayer endures upon the lip
And falls not waste : wherefore let sacrifice
Burn and run red in all the wider ways ;
Seeing I have sworn by the pale temples' band
And poppied hair of gold Persephone
Sad-tressed and pleached low down about her brows,
And by the sorrow in her lips, and death
Her dumb and mournful-mouthèd minister,
My word for you is eased of its harsh weight
And doubled with soft promise ; and your king
Triptolemus, this Celeus dead and swathed
Purple and pale for golden burial,
Shall be your helper in my services,
Dividing earth and reaping fruits thereof
In fields where wait, well-girt, well-wreathen, all
The heavy-handed seasons all year through ;
Saving the choice of warm spear-headed grain,
And stooping sharp to the slant-sided share
All beasts that furrow the remeasured land
With their bowed necks of burden equable.

AUGUST

THERE were four apples on the bough,
Half gold half red, that one might know
The blood was ripe inside the core ;
The colour of the leaves was more
Like stems of yellow corn that grow
Through all the gold June meadow's floor.

The warm smell of the fruit was good
To feed on, and the split green wood,
With all its bearded lips and stains
Of mosses in the cloven veins,
Most pleasant, if one lay or stood
In sunshine or in happy rains.

There were four apples on the tree,
Red stained through gold, that all might see
The sun went warm from core to rind ;
The green leaves made the summer blind
In that soft place they kept for me
With golden apples shut behind.

The leaves caught gold across the sun,
And where the bluest air begun

Thirsted for song to help the heat ;
As I to feel my lady's feet
Draw close before the day were done
Both lips grew dry with dreams of it.

In the mute August afternoon
They trembled to some undertune
Of music in the silver air ;
Great pleasure was it to be there
Till green turned duskier and the moon
Coloured the corn-sheaves like gold hair.

That August time it was delight
To watch the red moons wane to white
'Twixt grey seamed stems of apple-trees ;
A sense of heavy harmonies
Grew on the growth of patient night,
More sweet than shapen music is.

But some three hours before the moon
The air, still eager from the noon,
Flagged after heat, not wholly dead ;
Against the stem I leant my head ;
The colour soothed me like a tune,
Green leaves all round the gold and red.

I lay there till the warm smell grew
More sharp, when flecks of yellow dew
Between the round ripe leaves had blurred
The rind with stain and wet ; I heard
A wind that blew and breathed and blew,
Too weak to alter its one word.

The wet leaves next the gentle fruit
Felt smoother, and the brown tree-root
Felt the mould warmer : I too felt
(As water feels the slow gold melt
Right through it when the day burns mute)
The peace of time wherein love dwelt.

There were four apples on the tree,
Gold stained on red that all might see
The sweet blood filled them to the core :
The colour of her hair is more
Like stems of fair faint gold, that be
Mown from the harvest's middle floor.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL[1]

THREE damsels in the queen's chamber,
The queen's mouth was most fair;
She spake a word of God's mother
As the combs went in her hair.
Mary that is of might,
Bring us to thy Son's sight.

They held the gold combs out from her,
A span's length off her head;
She sang this song of God's mother
And of her bearing-bed.
Mary most full of grace,
Bring us to thy Son's face.

When she sat at Joseph's hand,
She looked against her side;
And either way from the short silk band
Her girdle was all wried.
Mary that all good may,
Bring us to thy Son's way.

[1] Suggested by a drawing of Mr. D. G. Rossetti's.

Mary had three women for her bed,
The twain were maidens clean;
The first of them had white and red,
The third had riven green.
Mary that is so sweet,
Bring us to thy Son's feet.

She had three women for her hair,
Two were gloved soft and shod;
The third had feet and fingers bare,
She was the likest God.
Mary that wieldeth land,
Bring us to thy Son's hand.

She had three women for her ease,
The twain were good women:
The first two were the two Maries,
The third was Magdalen.
Mary that perfect is,
Bring us to thy Son's kiss.

Joseph had three workmen in his stall,
To serve him well upon;
The first of them were Peter and Paul,
The third of them was John.
Mary, God's handmaiden,
Bring us to thy Son's ken.

"If your child be none other man's,
But if it be very mine,
The bedstead shall be gold two spans,
The bedfoot silver fine."
Mary that made God mirth,
Bring us to thy Son's birth.

"If the child be some other man's,
And if it be none of mine,
The manger shall be straw two spans,
Betwixen kine and kine."
Mary that made sin cease,
Bring us to thy Son's peace.

Christ was born upon this wise,
It fell on such a night,
Neither with sounds of psalteries,
Nor with fire for light.
Mary that is God's spouse,
Bring us to thy Son's house.

The star came out upon the east
With a great sound and sweet:
Kings gave gold to make him feast
And myrrh for him to eat.
Mary, of thy sweet mood,
Bring us to thy Son's good.

He had two handmaids at his head,
One handmaid at his feet;
The twain of them were fair and red
The third one was right sweet.
Mary that is most wise,
Bring us to thy Son's eyes. Amen

THE MASQUE OF QUEEN BERSABE

A MIRACLE-PLAY

KING DAVID

KNIGHTS mine, all that be in hall,
I have a counsel to you all,
Because of this thing God lets fall
Among us for a sign.
For some days hence as I did eat
From kingly dishes my good meat,
There flew a bird between my feet
As red as any wine.
This bird had a long bill of red
And a gold ring above his head;
Long time he sat and nothing said,
Put softly down his neck and fed
From the gilt patens fine:
And as I marvelled, at the last
He shut his two keen eyën fast
And suddenly woxe big and brast
Ere one should tell to nine.

PRIMUS MILES

Sir, note this that I will say;
That Lord who maketh corn with hay
And morrows each of yesterday,
He hath you in his hand.

SECUNDUS MILES (*Paganus quidam*)

By Satan I hold no such thing;
For if wine swell within a king
Whose ears for drink are hot and ring,
The same shall dream of wine-bibbing
Whilst he can lie or stand.

QUEEN BERSABE

Peace now, lords, for Godis head,
Ye chirk as starlings that be fed
And gape as fishes newly dead;
The devil put your bones to bed,
Lo, this is all to say.

SECUNDUS MILES

By Mahound, lords, I have good will
This devil's bird to wring and spill;
For now meseems our game goes ill,
Ye have scant hearts to play.

TERTIUS MILES

Lo, sirs, this word is there said,
That Urias the knight is dead
Through some ill craft; by Poulis head,
I doubt his blood hath made so red
This bird that flew from the queen's bed
Whereof ye have such fear.

KING DAVID

Yea, my good knave, and is it said
That I can raise men from the dead?
By God I think to have his head
Who saith words of my lady's bed
For any thief to hear.
Et percutiat eum in capite.

QUEEN BERSABE

I wis men shall spit at me,
And say, it were but right for thee
That one should hang thee on a tree;
Ho! it were a fair thing to see
The big stones bruise her false body;
Fie! who shall see her dead?

KING DAVID

I rede you have no fear of this,
For, as ye wot, the first good kiss
I had must be the last of his;
Now are ye queen of mine, I wis,
And lady of a house that is
Full rich of meat and bread.

PRIMUS MILES

I bid you make good cheer to be
So fair a queen as all men see.
And hold us for your lieges free;
By Peter's soul that hath the key,
Ye have good hap of it.

SECUNDUS MILES

I would that he were hanged and dead
Who hath no joy to see your head
With gold about it, barred on red;
I hold him as a sow of lead
That is so scant of wit.

Tunc dicat NATHAN *propheta*

O king, I have a word to thee;
The child that is in Bersabe
Shall wither without light to see;
This word is come of God by me
For sin that ye have done.
Because herein ye did not right,
To take the fair one lamb to smite
That was of Urias the knight;
Ye wist he had but one.
Full many sheep I wot ye had,
And many women, when ye bade,
To do your will and keep you glad,
And a good crown about your head
With gold to show thereon.
This Urias had one poor house
With low-barred latoun shot-windows
And scant of corn to fill a mouse;
And rusty basnets for his brows,
To wear them to the bone.
Yea the roofs also, as men sain,
Were thin to hold against the rain;
Therefore what rushes were there lain
Grew wet withouten foot of men;
The stancheons were all gone in twain
As sick man's flesh is gone.

Nathless he had great joy to see
The long hair of this Bersabe
Fall round her lap and round her knee
Even to her small soft feet, that be
Shod now with crimson royally
And covered with clean gold.
Likewise great joy he had to kiss
Her throat, where now the scarlet is
Against her little chin, I wis,
That then was but cold.
No scarlet then her kirtle had
And little gold about it sprad ;
But her red mouth was always glad
To kiss, albeit the eyes were sad
With love they had to hold.

SECUNDUS MILES

How ! old thief, thy wits are lame ;
To clip such it is no shame ;
I rede you in the devil's name,
Ye come not here to make men game,
By Termagaunt that maketh grame,
I shall to-bete thine head.
Hic Diabolus capiat eum.
This knave hath sharp fingers, perfay ;
Mahound you thank and keep alway,
And give you good knees to pray ;
What man hath no lust to play,
The devil wring his ears, I say ;
There is no more but wellaway,
For now am I dead.

KING DAVID

Certes his mouth is wried and black,
Full little pence be in his sack;
This devil hath him by the back,
It is no boot to lie.

NATHAN

Sitteth now still and learn of me;
A little while and ye shall see
The face of God's strength presently.
All queens made as this Bersabe,
All that were fair and foul ye be,
Come hither; it am I.

Et hìc omnes cantabunt.

HERODIAS

I am the queen Herodias.
This headband of my temples was
King Herod's gold band woven me.
This broken dry staff in my hand
Was the queen's staff of a great land
Betwixen Perse and Samarie.
For that one dancing of my feet,
The fire is come in my green wheat,
From one sea to the other sea.

AHOLIBAH

I am the queen Aholibah.
My lips kissed dumb the word of *Ah*
Sighed on strange lips grown sick thereby.
God wrought to me my royal bed;
The inner work thereof was red,
The outer work was ivory.

My mouth's heat was the heat of flame
For lust towards the kings that came
With horsemen riding royally.

CLEOPATRA

I am the queen of Ethiope.
Love bade my kissing eyelids ope
That men beholding might praise love.
My hair was wonderful and curled;
My lips held fast the mouth o' the world
To spoil the strength and speech thereof.
The latter triumph in my breath
Bowed down the beaten brows of death,
Ashamed they had not wrath enough.

ABIHAIL

I am the queen of Tyrians.
My hair was glorious for twelve spans,
That dried to loose dust afterward.
My stature was a strong man's length:
My neck was like a place of strength
Built with white walls, even and hard.
Like the first noise of rain leaves catch
One from another, snatch by snatch,
Is my praise, hissed against and marred.

AZUBAH

I am the queen of Amorites.
My face was like a place of lights
With multitudes at festival.
The glory of my gracious brows
Was like God's house made glorious
With colours upon either wall.

Between my brows and hair there was
A white space like a space of glass
With golden candles over all.

AHOLAH

I am the queen of Amalek.
There was no tender touch or fleck
To spoil my body or bared feet.
My words were soft like dulcimers,
And the first sweet of grape-flowers
Made each side of my bosom sweet.
My raiment was as tender fruit
Whose rind smells sweet of spice-tree root,
Bruised balm-blossom and budded wheat.

AHINOAM

I am the queen Ahinoam.
Like the throat of a soft slain lamb
Was my throat, softer veined than his:
My lips were as two grapes the sun
Lays his whole weight of heat upon
Like a mouth heavy with a kiss:
My hair's pure purple a wrought fleece,
My temples therein as a piece
Of a pomegranate's cleaving is.

ATARAH

I am the queen Sidonian.
My face made faint the face of man,
And strength was bound between my brows.
Spikenard was hidden in my ships,
Honey and wheat and myrrh in strips,
White wools that shine as colour does,

Soft linen dyed upon the fold,
Split spice and cores of scented gold,
Cedar and broken calamus.

SEMIRAMIS

I am the queen Semiramis.
The whole world and the sea that is
In fashion like a chrysopras,
The noise of all men labouring,
The priest's mouth tired through thanksgiving,
The sound of love in the blood's pause,
The strength of love in the blood's beat,
All these were cast beneath my feet
And all found lesser than I was.

HESIONE

I am the queen Hesione.
The seasons that increased in me
Made my face fairer than all men's.
I had the summer in my hair;
And all the pale gold autumn air
Was as the habit of my sense.
My body was as fire that shone;
God's beauty that makes all things one
Was one among my handmaidens.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

I am the queen of Samothrace.
God, making roses, made my face
As a rose filled up full with red.
My prows made sharp the straitened seas
From Pontus to that Chersonese
Whereon the ebbed Asian stream is shed.

My hair was as sweet scent that drips ;
Love's breath begun about my lips
Kindled the lips of people dead.

THOMYRIS

I am the queen of Scythians.
My strength was like no strength of man's,
My face like day, my breast like spring.
My fame was felt in the extreme land
That hath sunshine on the one hand
And on the other star-shining.
Yea, and the wind there fails of breath ;
Yea, and there life is waste like death ;
Yea, and there death is a glad thing.

HARHAS

I am the queen of Anakim.
In the spent years whose speech is dim,
Whose raiment is the dust and death,
My stately body without stain
Shone as the shining race of rain
Whose hair a great wind scattereth.
Now hath God turned my lips to sighs,
Plucked off mine eyelids from mine eyes,
And sealed with seals my way of breath.

MYRRHA

I am the queen Arabian.
The tears wherewith mine eyelids ran
Smelt like my perfumed eyelids' smell.
A harsh thirst made my soft mouth hard,
That ached with kisses afterward ;
My brain rang like a beaten bell.

As tears on eyes, as fire on wood,
Sin fed upon my breath and blood,
Sin made my breasts subside and swell.

PASIPHAE

I am the queen Pasiphae.
Not all the pure clean-coloured sea
Could cleanse or cool my yearning veins;
Nor any root nor herb that grew,
Flag-leaves that let green water through,
Nor washing of the dews and rains.
From shame's pressed core I wrung the sweet
Fruit's savour that was death to eat,
Whereof no seed but death remains.

SAPPHO

I am the queen of Lesbians.
My love, that had no part in man's,
Was sweeter than all shape of sweet.
The intolerable infinite desire
Made my face pale like faded fire
When the ashen pyre falls through with heat.
My blood was hot wan wine of love,
And my song's sound the sound thereof,
The sound of the delight of it.

MESSALINA

I am the queen of Italy.
These were the signs God set on me;
A barren beauty subtle and sleek,
Curled carven hair, and cheeks worn wan
With fierce false lips of many a man,
Large temples where the blood ran weak,

A mouth athirst and amorous
And hungering as the grave's mouth does
That, being an-hungred, cannot speak.

AMESTRIS

I am the queen of Persians.
My breasts were lordlier than bright swans,
My body as amber fair and thin.
Strange flesh was given my lips for bread,
With poisonous hours my days were fed,
And my feet shod with adder-skin.
In Shushan toward Ecbatane
I wrought my joys with tears and pain,
My loves with blood and bitter sin.

EPHRATH

I am the queen of Rephaim.
God, that some while refraineth him,
Made in the end a spoil of me.
My rumour was upon the world
As strong sound of swoln water hurled
Through porches of the straining sea.
My hair was like the flag-flower,
And my breasts carven goodlier
Than beryl with chalcedony.

PASITHEA

I am the queen of Cypriotes.
Mine oarsmen, labouring with brown throats,
Sang of me many a tender thing.
My maidens, girdled loose and braced
With gold from bosom to white waist,
Praised me between their wool-combing.

All that praise Venus all night long
With lips like speech and lids like song
Praised me till song lost heart to sing.

ALACIEL

I am the queen Alaciel.
My mouth was like that moist gold cell
Whereout the thickest honey drips.
Mine eyes were as a grey-green sea ;
The amorous blood that smote on me
Smote to my feet and finger-tips.
My throat was whiter than the dove,
Mine eyelids as the seals of love,
And as the doors of love my lips.

ERIGONE

I am the queen Erigone.
The wild wine shed as blood on me
Made my face brighter than a bride's.
My large lips had the old thirst of earth,
Mine arms the might of the old sea's girth
Bound round the whole world's iron sides.
Within mine eyes and in mine ears
Were music and the wine of tears,
And light, and thunder of the tides.

Et hìc exeant, et dicat Bersabe regina ;

Alas, God, for thy great pity
And for the might that is in thee,
Behold, I woful Bersabe
Cry out with stoopings of my knee
And thy wrath laid and bound on me
Till I may see thy love.

Behold, Lord, this child is grown
Within me between bone and bone
To make me mother of a son,
Made of my body with strong moan;
There shall not be another one
That shall be made hereof.

KING DAVID

Lord God, alas, what shall I sain?
Lo, thou art as an hundred men
Both to break and build again:
The wild ways thou makest plain,
Thine hands hold the hail and rain,
And thy fingers both grape and grain;
Of their largess we be all well fain,
And of their great pity:
The sun thou madest of good gold,
Of clean silver the moon cold,
All the great stars thou hast told
As thy cattle in thy fold
Every one by his name of old;
Wind and water thou hast in hold,
Both the land and the long sea;
Both the green sea and the land,
Lord God, thou hast in hand,
Both white water and grey sand;
Upon thy right or thy left hand
There is no man that may stand;
Lord, thou rue on me.
O wise Lord, if thou be keen
To note things amiss that been,
I am not worth a shell of bean
More than an old mare meagre and lean;

For all my wrong-doing with my queen,
It grew not of our heartès clean,
But it began of her body.
For it fell in the hot May
I stood within a paven way
Built of fair bright stone, perfay,
That is as fire of night and day
And lighteth all my house.
Therein be neither stones nor sticks,
Neither red nor white bricks,
But for cubits five or six
There is most goodly sardonyx
And amber laid in rows.
It goes round about my roofs,
(If ye list ye shall have proofs)
There is good space for horse and hoofs,
Plain and nothing perilous.
For the fair green weather's heat,
And for the smell of leavès sweet,
It is no marvel, well ye weet,
A man to waxen amorous.
This I say now by my case
That spied forth of that royal place;
There I saw in no great space
Mine own sweet, both body and face,
Under the fresh boughs.
In a water that was there
She wesshe her goodly body bare
And dried it with her owen hair:
Both her arms and her knees fair,
Both bosom and brows;
Both shoulders and eke thighs
Tho she wesshe upon this wise;
Ever she sighed with little sighs,
And ever she gave God thank.

Yea, God wot I can well see yet
Both her breast and her sides all wet
And her long hair withouten let
Spread sideways like a drawing net;
Full dear bought and full far fet
Was that sweet thing there y-set;
It were a hard thing to forget
How both lips and eyen met,
Breast and breath sank.
So goodly a sight as there she was,
Lying looking on her glass
By wan water in green grass,
Yet saw never man.
So soft and great she was and bright
With all her body waxen white,
I woxe nigh blind to see the light
Shed out of it to left and right;
This bitter sin from that sweet sight
Between us twain began.

NATHAN

Now, sir, be merry anon,
For ye shall have a full wise son,
Goodly and great of flesh and bone;
There shall no king be such an one,
I swear by Godis rood.
Therefore, lord, be merry here,
And go to meat withouten fear,
And hear a mass with goodly cheer;
For to all folk ye shall be dear,
And all folk of your blood.

Et tunc dicant Laudamus.

ST. DOROTHY

It hath been seen and yet it shall be seen
That out of tender mouths God's praise hath been
Made perfect, and with wood and simple string
He hath played music sweet as shawm-playing
To please himself with softness of all sound;
And no small thing but hath been sometime found
Full sweet of use, and no such humbleness
But God hath bruised withal the sentences
And evidence of wise men witnessing;
No leaf that is so soft a hidden thing
It never shall get sight of the great sun;
The strength of ten has been the strength of one,
And lowliness has waxed imperious.
  There was in Rome a man Theophilus
Of right great blood and gracious ways, that had
All noble fashions to make people glad
And a soft life of pleasurable days;
He was a goodly man for one to praise,
Flawless and whole upward from foot to head;
His arms were a red hawk that alway fed
On a small bird with feathers gnawed upon,
Beaten and plucked about the bosom-bone
Whereby a small round fleck like fire there was:
They called it in their tongue lampadias;

This was the banner of the lordly man.
In many straits of sea and reaches wan
Full of quick wind, and many a shaken firth,
It had seen fighting days of either earth,
Westward or east of waters Gaditane
(This was the place of sea-rocks under Spain
Called after the great praise of Hercules)
And north beyond the washing Pontic seas,
Far windy Russian places fabulous,
And salt fierce tides of storm-swoln Bosphorus.
Now as this lord came straying in Rome town
He saw a little lattice open down
And after it a press of maidens' heads
That sat upon their cold small quiet beds
Talking, and played upon short-stringèd lutes ;
And other some ground perfume out of roots
Gathered by marvellous moons in Asia ;
Saffron and aloes and wild cassia,
Coloured all through and smelling of the sun ;
And over all these was a certain one
Clothed softly, with sweet herbs about her hair
And bosom flowerful ; her face more fair
Than sudden-singing April in soft lands :
Eyed like a gracious bird, and in both hands
She held a psalter painted green and red.
This Theophile laughed at the heart, and said,
Now God so help me hither and St. Paul,
As by the new time of their festival
I have good will to take this maid to wife.
And herewith fell to fancies of her life
And soft half-thoughts that ended suddenly.
This is man's guise to please himself, when he
Shall not see one thing of his pleasant things,
Nor with outwatch of many travailings

Come to be eased of the least pain he hath
For all his love and all his foolish wrath
And all the heavy manner of his mind.
Thus is he like a fisher fallen blind
That casts his nets across the boat awry
To strike the sea, but lo, he striketh dry
And plucks them back all broken for his pain
And bites his beard and casts across again
And reaching wrong slips over in the sea.
So hath this man a strangled neck for fee,
For all his cost he chuckles in his throat.
  This Theophile that little hereof wote
Laid wait to hear of her what she might be:
Men told him she had name of Dorothy,
And was a lady of a worthy house.
Thereat this knight grew inly glorious
That he should have a love so fair of place.
She was a maiden of most quiet face,
Tender of speech, and had no hardihood
But was nigh feeble of her fearful blood;
Her mercy in her was so marvellous
From her least years, that seeing her school-fellows
That read beside her stricken with a rod,
She would cry sore and say some word to God
That he would ease her fellow of his pain.
There is no touch of sun or fallen rain
That ever fell on a more gracious thing.
  In middle Rome there was in stone-working
The church of Venus painted royally.
The chapels of it were some two or three,
In each of them her tabernacle was
And a wide window of six feet in glass
Coloured with all her works in red and gold.
The altars had bright cloths and cups to hold

The wine of Venus for the services,
Made out of honey and crushed wood-berries
That shed sweet yellow through the thick wet red,
That on high days was borne upon the head
Of Venus' priest for any man to drink ;
So that in drinking he should fall to think
On some fair face, and in the thought thereof
Worship, and such should triumph in his love.
For this soft wine that did such grace and good
Was new trans-shaped and mixed with Love's own blood,
That in the fighting Trojan time was bled ;
For which came such a woe to Diomed
That he was stifled after in hard sea.
And some said that this wine-shedding should be
Made of the falling of Adonis' blood,
That curled upon the thorns and broken wood
And round the gold silk shoes on Venus' feet ;
The taste thereof was as hot honey sweet
And in the mouth ran soft and riotous.
This was the holiness of Venus' house.
It was their worship, that in August days
Twelve maidens should go through those Roman ways
Naked, and having gold across their brows
And their hair twisted in short golden rows,
To minister to Venus in this wise :
And twelve men chosen in their companies
To match these maidens by the altar-stair,
All in one habit, crowned upon the hair.
Among these men was chosen Theophile.
This knight went out and prayed a little while,
Holding queen Venus by her hands and knees :
I will give thee twelve royal images

Cut in glad gold, with marvels of wrought stone
For thy sweet priests to lean and pray upon,
Jasper and hyacinth and chrysopras,
And the strange Asian thalamite that was
Hidden twelve ages under heavy sea
Among the little sleepy pearls, to be
A shrine lit over with soft candle-flame
Burning all night red as hot brows of shame,
So thou wilt be my lady without sin.
Goddess that art all gold outside and in,
Help me to serve thee in thy holy way.
Thou knowest, Love, that in my bearing day
There shone a laughter in the singing stars
Round the gold-ceilèd bride-bed wherein Mars
Touched thee and had thee in your kissing wise.
Now therefore, sweet, kiss thou my maiden's eyes
That they may open graciously towards me ;
And this new fashion of thy shrine shall be
As soft with gold as thine own happy head.
The goddess, that was painted with face red
Between two long green tumbled sides of sea,
Stooped her neck sideways, and spake pleasantly :
Thou shalt have grace as thou art thrall of mine.
And with this came a savour of shed wine
And plucked-out petals from a rose's head :
And softly with slow laughs of lip she said,
Thou shalt have favour all thy days of me.
Then came Theophilus to Dorothy,
Saying : O sweet, if one should strive or speak
Against God's ways, he gets a beaten cheek
For all his wage and shame above all men.
Therefore I have no will to turn again
When God saith "go," lest a worse thing fall out.
Then she, misdoubting lest he went about

To catch her wits, made answer somewhat thus :
I have no will, my lord Theophilus,
To speak against this worthy word of yours ;
Knowing how God's will in all speech endures,
That save by grace there may no thing be said.
Then Theophile waxed light from foot to head,
And softly fell upon this answering.
It is well seen you are a chosen thing
To do God service in his gracious way.
I will that you make haste and holiday
To go next year upon the Venus stair,
Covered none else, but crowned upon your hair,
And do the service that a maiden doth.
She said : but I that am Christ's maid were loth
To do this thing that hath such bitter name.
Thereat his brows were beaten with sore shame
And he came off and said no other word.
Then his eyes chanced upon his banner-bird,
And he fell fingering at the staff of it
And laughed for wrath and stared between his feet,
And out of a chafed heart he spake as thus :
Lo how she japes at me Theophilus,
Feigning herself a fool and hard to love ;
Yet in good time for all she boasteth of
She shall be like a little beaten bird.
And while his mouth was open in that word
He came upon the house Janiculum,
Where some went busily, and other some
Talked in the gate called the gate glorious.
The emperor, which was one Gabalus,
Sat over all and drank chill wine alone.
To whom is come Theophilus anon,
And said as thus : *Beau sire, Dieu vous aide.*
And afterward sat under him, and said

All this thing through as ye have wholly heard.
This Gabalus laughed thickly in his beard.
Yea, this is righteousness and maiden rule.
Truly, he said, a maid is but a fool.
And japed at them as one full villainous,
In a lewd wise, this heathen Gabalus,
And sent his men to bind her as he bade.
Thus have they taken Dorothy the maid,
And haled her forth as men hale pick-purses:
A little need God knows they had of this,
To hale her by her maiden gentle hair.
Thus went she lowly, making a soft prayer,
As one who stays the sweet wine in his mouth,
Murmuring with eased lips, and is most loth
To have done wholly with the sweet of it.
Christ king, fair Christ, that knowest all men's wit
And all the feeble fashion of my ways,
O perfect God, that from all yesterdays
Abidest whole with morrows perfected,
I pray thee by thy mother's holy head
Thou help me to do right, that I not slip:
I have no speech nor strength upon my lip,
Except thou help me who art wise and sweet.
Do this too for those nails that clove thy feet,
Let me die maiden after many pains.
Though I be least among thy handmaidens,
Doubtless I shall take death more sweetly thus.
Now have they brought her to King Gabalus,
Who laughed in all his throat some breathing-whiles:
By God, he said, if one should leap two miles,
He were not pained about the sides so much.
This were a soft thing for a man to touch.

Shall one so chafe that hath such little bones?
And shook his throat with thick and chuckled moans
For laughter that she had such holiness.
What aileth thee, wilt thou do services?
It were good fare to fare as Venus doth.
Then said this lady with her maiden mouth
Shamefaced, and something paler in the cheek:
Now, sir, albeit my wit and will to speak
Give me no grace in sight of worthy men,
For all my shame yet know I this again,
I may not speak, nor after downlying
Rise up to take delight in lute-playing,
Nor sing nor sleep, nor sit and fold my hands,
But my soul in some measure understands
God's grace laid like a garment over me.
For this fair God that out of strong sharp sea
Lifted the shapely and green-coloured land,
And hath the weight of heaven in his hand
As one might hold a bird, and under him
The heavy golden planets beam by beam
Building the feasting-chambers of his house,
And the large world he holdeth with his brows,
And with the light of them astonisheth
All place and time and face of life and death
And motion of the north wind and the south,
And is the sound within his angel's mouth
Of singing words and words of thanksgiving,
And is the colour of the latter spring
And heat upon the summer and the sun,
And is beginning of all things begun
And gathers in him all things to their end,
And with the fingers of his hand doth bend
The stretched-out sides of heaven like a sail,
And with his breath he maketh the red pale

And fills with blood faint faces of men dead,
And with the sound between his lips are fed
Iron and fire and the white body of snow,
And blossom of all trees in places low,
And small bright herbs about the little hills,
And fruit pricked softly with birds' tender bills,
And flight of foam about green fields of sea,
And fourfold strength of the great winds that be
Moved always outward from beneath his feet,
And growth of grass and growth of sheavèd wheat
And all green flower of goodly-growing lands ;
And all these things he gathers with his hands
And covers all their beauty with his wings ;
The same, even God that governs all these things,
Hath set my feet to be upon his ways.
Now therefore for no painfulness of days
I shall put off this service bound on me.
Also, fair sir, ye know this certainly,
How God was in his flesh full chaste and meek
And gave his face to shame, and either cheek
Gave up to smiting of men tyrannous.
And here with a great voice this Gabalus
Cried out and said : By God's blood and his bones,
This were good game betwixen night and nones
For one to sit and hearken to such saws :
I were as lief fall in some big beast's jaws
As hear these women's jaw-teeth clattering ;
By God a woman is the harder thing,
One may not put a hook into her mouth.
Now by St. Luke I am so sore adrouth
For all these saws I must needs drink again.
But I pray God deliver all us men
From all such noise of women and their heat.
That is a noble scripture, well I weet,

That likens women to an empty can ;
When God said that he was a full wise man.
I trow no man may blame him as for that.
And herewithal he drank a draught, and spat,
And said : Now shall I make an end hereof.
Come near all men and hearken for God's love,
And ye shall hear a jest or twain, God wot.
And spake as thus with mouth full thick and hot
But thou do this thou shalt be shortly slain.
Lo, sir, she said, this death and all His pain
I take in penance of my bitter sins.
Yea now, quoth Gabalus, this game begins.
Lo, without sin one shall not live a span.
Lo, this is she that would not look on man
Between her fingers folded in thwart wise.
See how her shame hath smitten in her eyes
That was so clean she had not heard of shame.
Certes, he said, by Gabalus my name,
This two years back I was not so well pleased.
This were good mirth for sick men to be eased
And rise up whole and laugh at hearing of.
I pray thee show us something of thy love,
Since thou wast maid thy gown is waxen wide.
Yea, maid I am, she said, and somewhat sighed,
As one who thought upon the low fair house
Where she sat working, with soft bended brows
Watching her threads, among the school-maidens.
And she thought well now God had brought her thence
She should not come to sew her gold again.
Then cried King Gabalus upon his men
To have her forth and draw her with steel gins.
And as a man hag-ridden beats and grins
And bends his body sidelong in his bed,
So wagged he with his body and knave's head,

Gaping at her, and blowing with his breath.
And in good time he gat an evil death
Out of his lewdness with his cursèd wives :
His bones were hewn asunder as with knives
For his misliving, certes it is said.
But all the evil wrought upon this maid,
It were full hard for one to handle it.
For her soft blood was shed upon her feet,
And all her body's colour bruised and faint.
But she, as one abiding God's great saint,
Spake not nor wept for all this travail hard.
Wherefore the king commanded afterward
To slay her presently in all men's sight.
And it was now an hour upon the night
And winter-time, and a few stars began.
The weather was yet feeble and all wan
For beating of a weighty wind and snow.
And she came walking in soft wise and slow,
And many men with faces piteous.
Then came this heavy cursing Gabalus,
That swore full hard into his drunken beard ;
And faintly after without any word
Came Theophile some paces off the king.
And in the middle of this wayfaring
Full tenderly beholding her he said :
  There is no word of comfort with men dead
Nor any face and colour of things sweet ;
But always with lean cheeks and lifted feet
These dead men lie all aching to the blood
With bitter cold, their brows withouten hood
Beating for chill, their bodies swathed full thin :
Alas, what hire shall any have herein
To give his life and get such bitterness ?
Also the soul going forth bodiless

Is hurt with naked cold, and no man saith
If there be house or covering for death
To hide the soul that is discomforted.
Then she beholding him a little said:
Alas, fair lord, ye have no wit of this;
For on one side death is full poor of bliss
And as ye say full sharp of bone and lean:
But on the other side is good and green
And hath soft flower of tender-coloured hair
Grown on his head, and a red mouth as fair
As may be kissed with lips; thereto his face
Is as God's face, and in a perfect place
Full of all sun and colour of straight boughs
And waterheads about a painted house
That hath a mile of flowers either way
Outward from it, and blossom-grass of May
Thickening on many a side for length of heat,
Hath God set death upon a noble seat
Covered with green and flowered in the fold,
In likeness of a great king grown full old
And gentle with new temperance of blood;
And on his brows a purfled purple hood,
They may not carry any golden thing;
And plays some tune with subtle fingering
On a small cithern, full of tears and sleep
And heavy pleasure that is quick to weep
And sorrow with the honey in her mouth;
And for this might of music that he doth
Are all souls drawn toward him with great love
And weep for sweetness of the noise thereof
And bow to him with worship of their knees;
And all the field is thick with companies
Of fair-clothed men that play on shawms and lutes
And gather honey of the yellow fruits

Between the branches waxen soft and wide :
And all this peace endures in either side
Of the green land, and God beholdeth all.
And this is girdled with a round fair wall
Made of red stone and cool with heavy leaves
Grown out against it, and green blossom cleaves
To the green chinks, and lesser wall-weed sweet,
Kissing the crannies that are split with heat,
And branches where the summer draws to head.
  And Theophile burnt in the cheek, and said :
Yea, could one see it, this were marvellous.
I pray you, at your coming to this house,
Give me some leaf of all those tree-branches ;
Seeing how so sharp and white our weather is,
There is no green nor gracious red to see.
  Yea, sir, she said, that shall I certainly.
And from her long sweet throat without a fleck
Undid the gold, and through her stretched-out neck
The cold axe clove, and smote away her head :
Out of her throat the tender blood full red
Fell suddenly through all her long soft hair.
And with good speed for hardness of the air
Each man departed to his house again.
  Lo, as fair colour in the face of men
At seed-time of their blood, or in such wise
As a thing seen increaseth in men's eyes,
Caught first far off by sickly fits of sight,
So a word said, if one shall hear aright,
Abides against the season of its growth.
This Theophile went slowly, as one doth
That is not sure for sickness of his feet ;
And counting the white stonework of the street,
Tears fell out of his eyes for wrath and love,
Making him weep more for the shame thereof

Than for true pain : so went he half a mile.
And women mocked him, saying : Theophile,
Lo, she is dead ; what shall a woman have
That loveth such an one ? so Christ me save,
I were as lief to love a man new-hung.
Surely this man has bitten on his tongue,
This makes him sad and writhled in his face.
And when they came upon the paven place
That was called sometime the place amorous
There came a child before Theophilus
Bearing a basket, and said suddenly :
Fair sir, this is my mistress Dorothy
That sends you gifts ; and with this he was gone.
In all this earth there is not such an one
For colour and straight stature made so fair.
The tender growing gold of his pure hair
Was as wheat growing, and his mouth as flame.
God called him Holy after his own name ;
With gold cloth like fire burning he was clad.
But for the fair green basket that he had,
It was filled up with heavy white and red ;
Great roses stained still where the first rose bled,
Burning at heart for shame their heart withholds :
And the sad colour of strong marigolds
That have the sun to kiss their lips for love ;
The flower that Venus' hair is woven of,
The colour of fair apples in the sun,
Late peaches gathered when the heat was done
And the slain air got breath ; and after these
The fair faint-headed poppies drunk with ease,
And heaviness of hollow lilies red.
Then cried they all that saw these things, and said
It was God's doing, and was marvellous.
And in brief while this knight Theophilus

Is waxen full of faith, and witnesseth
Before the king of God and love and death,
For which the king bade hang him presently.
A gallows of a goodly piece of tree
This Gabalus hath made to hang him on.
Forth of this world lo Theophile is gone
With a wried neck, God give us better fare
Than his that hath a twisted throat to wear;
But truly for his love God hath him brought
There where his heavy body grieves him nought
Nor all the people plucking at his feet;
But in his face his lady's face is sweet,
And through his lips her kissing lips are gone:
God send him peace, and joy of such an one.
This is the story of St. Dorothy.
I will you of your mercy pray for me
Because I wrote these sayings for your grace,
That I may one day see her in the face.

THE TWO DREAMS

(FROM BOCCACCIO)

I WILL that if I say a heavy thing
Your tongues forgive me ; seeing ye know that spring
Has flecks and fits of pain to keep her sweet,
And walks somewhile with winter-bitten feet.
Moreover it sounds often well to let
One string, when ye play music, keep at fret
The whole song through ; one petal that is dead
Confirms the roses, be they white or red ;
Dead sorrow is not sorrowful to hear
As the thick noise that breaks mid weeping were ;
The sick sound aching in a lifted throat
Turns to sharp silver of a perfect note ;
And though the rain falls often, and with rain
Late autumn falls on the old red leaves like pain,
I deem that God is not disquieted.
Also while men are fed with wine and bread,
They shall be fed with sorrow at his hand.
  There grew a rose-garden in Florence land
More fair than many ; all red summers through
The leaves smelt sweet and sharp of rain, and blew
Sideways with tender wind ; and therein fell
Sweet sound wherewith the green waxed audible,

As a bird's will to sing disturbed his throat
And set the sharp wings forward like a boat
Pushed through soft water, moving his brown side
Smooth-shapen as a maid's, and shook with pride
His deep warm bosom, till the heavy sun's
Set face of heat stopped all the songs at once.
The ways were clean to walk and delicate;
And when the windy white of March grew late,
Before the trees took heart to face the sun
With ravelled raiment of lean winter on,
The roots were thick and hot with hollow grass.
Some roods away a lordly house there was,
Cool with broad courts and latticed passage wet
From rush-flowers and lilies ripe to set,
Sown close among the strewings of the floor;
And either wall of the slow corridor
Was dim with deep device of gracious things;
Some angel's steady mouth and weight of wings
Shut to the side; or Peter with straight stole
And beard cut black against the aureole
That spanned his head from nape to crown; thereby
Mary's gold hair, thick to the girdle-tie
Wherein was bound a child with tender feet;
Or the broad cross with blood nigh brown on it.
Within this house a righteous lord abode,
Ser Averardo; patient of his mood,
And just of judgment; and to child he had
A maid so sweet that her mere sight made glad
Men sorrowing, and unbound the brows of hate;
And where she came, the lips that pain made strait
Waxed warm and wide, and from untender grew
Tender as those that sleep brings patience to.
Such long locks had she, that with knee to chin
She might have wrapped and warmed her feet therein.

Right seldom fell her face on weeping wise;
Gold hair she had, and golden-coloured eyes,
Filled with clear light and fire and large repose
Like a fair hound's; no man there is but knows
Her face was white, and thereto she was tall;
In no wise lacked there any praise at all
To her most perfect and pure maidenhood;
No sin I think there was in all her blood.
She, where a gold grate shut the roses in,
Dwelt daily through deep summer weeks, through green
Hushed hours of rain upon the leaves; and there
Love made him room and space to worship her
With tender worship of bowed knees, and wrought
Such pleasure as the pained sense palates not
For weariness, but at one taste undoes
The heart of its strong sweet, is ravenous
Of all the hidden honey; words and sense
Fail through the tune's imperious prevalence.
In a poor house this lover kept apart,
Long communing with patience next his heart
If love of his might move that face at all,
Tuned evenwise with colours musical;
Then after length of days he said thus: "Love,
For love's own sake and for the love thereof
Let no harsh words untune your gracious mood;
For good it were, if anything be good,
To comfort me in this pain's plague of mine;
Seeing thus, how neither sleep nor bread nor wine
Seems pleasant to me, yea no thing that is
Seems pleasant to me; only I know this,
Love's ways are sharp for palms of piteous feet
To travel, but the end of such is sweet:

Now do with me as seemeth you the best."
She mused a little, as one holds his guest
By the hand musing, with her face borne down :
Then said : "Yea, though such bitter seed be sown,
Have no more care of all that you have said ;
Since if there is no sleep will bind your head,
Lo, I am fain to help you certainly ;
Christ knoweth, sir, if I would have you die ;
There is no pleasure when a man is dead."
Thereat he kissed her hands and yellow head
And clipped her fair long body many times ;
I have no wit to shape in written rhymes
A scanted tithe of this great joy they had.
They were too near love's secret to be glad ;
As whoso deems the core will surely melt
From the warm fruit his lips caress, hath felt
Some bitter kernel where the teeth shut hard :
Or as sweet music sharpens afterward,
Being half disrelished both for sharp and sweet ;
As sea-water, having killed over-heat
In a man's body, chills it with faint ache ;
So their sense, burdened only for love's sake,
Failed for pure love ; yet so time served their wit,
They saved each day some gold reserves of it,
Being wiser in love's riddle than such be
Whom fragments feed with his chance charity.
All things felt sweet were felt sweet overmuch ;
The rose-thorn's prickle dangerous to touch,
And flecks of fire in the thin leaf-shadows ;
Too keen the breathèd honey of the rose,
Its red too harsh a weight on feasted eyes ;
They were so far gone in love's histories,
Beyond all shape and colour and mere breath,
Where pleasure has for kinsfolk sleep and death,

And strength of soul and body waxen blind
For weariness, and flesh entoiled with mind,
When the keen edge of sense foretasteth sin.
Even this green place the summer caught them in
Seemed half deflowered and sick with beaten leaves
In their strayed eyes; these gold flower-fumèd eves
Burnt out to make the sun's love-offering,
The midnoon's prayer, the rose's thanksgiving,
The trees' weight burdening the strengthless air,
The shape of her stilled eyes, her coloured hair,
Her body's balance from the moving feet—
All this, found fair, lacked yet one grain of sweet
It had some warm weeks back: so perisheth
On May's new lip the tender April breath:
So those same walks the wind sowed lilies in
All April through, and all their latter kin
Of languid leaves whereon the Autumn blows—
The dead red raiment of the last year's rose—
The last year's laurel, and the last year's love,
Fade, and grow things that death grows weary of.
What man will gather in red summer-time
The fruit of some obscure and hoary rhyme
Heard last midwinter, taste the heart in it,
Mould the smooth semitones afresh, refit
The fair limbs ruined, flush the dead blood through
With colour, make all broken beauties new
For love's new lesson—shall not such find pain
When the marred music labouring in his brain
Frets him with sweet sharp fragments, and lets slip
One word that might leave satisfied his lip—
One touch that might put fire in all the chords?
This was her pain: to miss from all sweet words
Some taste of sound, diverse and delicate—
Some speech the old love found out to compensate

For seasons of shut lips and drowsiness—
Some grace, some word the old love found out to bless
Passionless months and undelighted weeks.
The flowers had lost their summer-scented cheeks,
Their lips were no more sweet than daily breath :
The year was plagued with instances of death.
So fell it, these were sitting in cool grass
With leaves about, and many a bird there was
Where the green shadow thickliest impleached
Soft fruit and writhen spray and blossom bleached
Dry in the sun or washed with rains to white :
Her girdle was pure silk, the bosom bright
With purple as purple water and gold wrought in.
One branch had touched with dusk her lips and chin,
Made violet of the throat, abashed with shade
The breast's bright plaited work : but nothing frayed
The sun's large kiss on the luxurious hair.
Her beauty was new colour to the air
And music to the silent many birds.
Love was an-hungred for some perfect words
To praise her with ; but only her low name
" Andrevuola " came thrice, and thrice put shame
In her clear cheek, so fruitful with new red
That for pure love straightway shame's self was dead.
Then with lids gathered as who late had wept
She began saying : " I have so little slept
My lids drowse now against the very sun ;
Yea, the brain aching with a dream begun
Beats like a fitful blood ; kiss but both brows,
And you shall pluck my thoughts grown dangerous
Almost away." He said thus, kissing them :
" O sole sweet thing that God is glad to name,
My one gold gift, if dreams be sharp and sore
Shall not the waking time increase much more

With taste and sound, sweet eyesight or sweet
scent?
Has any heat too hard and insolent
Burnt bare the tender married leaves, undone
The maiden grass shut under from the sun?
Where in this world is room enough for pain?"
The feverish finger of love had touched again
Her lips with happier blood; the pain lay meek
In her fair face, nor altered lip nor cheek
With pallor or with pulse; but in her mouth
Love thirsted as a man wayfaring doth,
Making it humble as weak hunger is.
She lay close to him, bade do this and this,
Say that, sing thus: then almost weeping-ripe
Crouched, then laughed low. As one that fain would
wipe
The old record out of old things done and dead,
She rose, she heaved her hands up, and waxed red
For wilful heart and blameless fear of blame;
Saying "Though my wits be weak, this is no shame
For a poor maid whom love so punisheth
With heats of hesitation and stopped breath
That with my dreams I live yet heavily
For pure sad heart and faith's humility.
Now be not wroth and I will show you this.
"Methought our lips upon their second kiss
Met in this place, and a fair day we had
And fair soft leaves that waxed and were not sad
With shaken rain or bitten through with drouth;
When I, beholding ever how your mouth
Waited for mine, the throat being fallen back,
Saw crawl thereout a live thing flaked with black
Specks of brute slime and leper-coloured scale,
A devil's hide with foul flame-writhen grail

Fashioned where hell's heat festers loathsomest;
And that brief speech may ease me of the rest,
Thus were you slain and eaten of the thing.
My waked eyes felt the new day shuddering
On their low lids, felt the whole east so beat,
Pant with close pulse of such a plague-struck heat,
As if the palpitating dawn drew breath
For horror, breathing between life and death,
Till the sun sprang blood-bright and violent."
So finishing, her soft strength wholly spent,
She gazed each way, lest some brute-hoovèd thing,
The timeless travail of hell's childbearing,
Should threat upon the sudden: whereat he,
For relish of her tasted misery
And tender little thornprick of her pain,
Laughed with mere love. What lover among men
But hath his sense fed sovereignly 'twixt whiles
With tears and covered eyelids and sick smiles
And soft disaster of a painèd face?
What pain, established in so sweet a place,
But the plucked leaf of it smells fragrantly?
What colour burning man's wide-open eye
But may be pleasurably seen? what sense
Keeps in its hot sharp extreme violence
No savour of sweet things? The bereaved blood
And emptied flesh in their most broken mood
Fail not so wholly, famish not when thus
Past honey keeps the starved lip covetous.
Therefore this speech from a glad mouth began,
Breathed in her tender hair and temples wan
Like one prolonged kiss while the lips had breath.
"Sleep, that abides in vassalage of death
And in death's service wears out half his age,
Hath his dreams full of deadly vassalage,

Shadow and sound of things ungracious;
Fair shallow faces, hooded bloodless brows,
And mouths past kissing; yea, myself have had
As harsh a dream as holds your eyelids sad.
"This dream I tell you came three nights ago;
In full mid sleep I took a whim to know
How sweet things might be; so I turned and thought;
But save my dream all sweet availed me not.
First came a smell of pounded spice and scent
Such as God ripens in some continent
Of utmost amber in the Syrian sea;
And breaths as though some costly rose could be
Spoiled slowly, wasted by some bitter fire
To burn the sweet out leaf by leaf, and tire
The flower's poor heart with heat and waste, to make
Strong magic for some perfumed woman's sake.
Then a cool naked sense beneath my feet
Of bud and blossom; and sound of veins that beat
As if a lute should play of its own heart
And fearfully, not smitten of either part;
And all my blood it filled with sharp and sweet
As gold swoln grain fills out the huskèd wheat;
So I rose naked from the bed, and stood
Counting the mobile measure in my blood
Some pleasant while, and through each limb there came
Swift little pleasures pungent as a flame,
Felt in the thrilling flesh and veins as much
As the outer curls that feel the comb's first touch
Thrill to the roots and shiver as from fire;
And blind between my dream and my desire
I seemed to stand and held my spirit still
Lest this should cease. A child whose fingers spill

Honey from cells forgotten of the bee
Is less afraid to stir the hive and see
Some wasp's bright back inside, than I to feel
Some finger-touch disturb the flesh like steel.
I prayed thus ; Let me catch a secret here
So sweet, it sharpens the sweet taste of fear
And takes the mouth with edge of wine ; I would
Have here some colour and smooth shape as good
As those in heaven whom the chief garden hides
With low grape-blossom veiling their white sides
And lesser tendrils that so bind and blind
Their eyes and feet, that if one come behind
To touch their hair they see not, neither fly ;
This would I see in heaven and not die.
So praying, I had nigh cried out and knelt,
So wholly my prayer filled me : till I felt
In the dumb night's warm weight of glowing gloom
Somewhat that altered all my sleeping-room,
And made it like a green low place wherein
Maids mix to bathe : one sets her small warm chin
Against a ripple, that the angry pearl
May flow like flame about her : the next curl
Dips in some eddy coloured of the sun
To wash the dust well out ; another one
Holds a straight ankle in her hand and swings
With lavish body sidelong, so that rings
Of sweet fierce water, swollen and splendid, fail
All round her fine and floated body pale,
Swayed flower-fashion, and her balanced side
Swerved edgeways lets the weight of water slide,
As taken in some underflow of sea
Swerves the banked gold of sea-flowers ; but she
Pulls down some branch to keep her perfect head
Clear of the river : even from wall to bed,

I tell you, was my room transfigured so.
Sweet, green and warm it was, nor could one know
If there were walls or leaves, or if there was
No bed's green curtain, but mere gentle grass.
There were set also hard against the feet
Gold plates with honey and green grapes to eat,
With the cool water's noise to hear in rhymes :
And a wind warmed me full of furze and limes
And all hot sweets the heavy summer fills
To the round brim of smooth cup-shapen hills.
Next the grave walking of a woman's feet
Made my veins hesitate, and gracious heat
Made thick the lids and leaden on mine eyes :
And I thought ever, surely it were wise
Not yet to see her : this may last (who knows ?)
Five minutes ; the poor rose is twice a rose
Because it turns a face to her, the wind
Sings that way ; hath this woman ever sinned,
I wonder ? as a boy with apple-rind,
I played with pleasures, made them to my mind,
Changed each ere tasting. When she came indeed,
First her hair touched me, then I grew to feed
On the sense of her hand ; her mouth at last
Touched me between the cheek and lip and past
Over my face with kisses here and there
Sown in and out across the eyes and hair.
Still I said nothing ; till she set her face
More close and harder on the kissing-place,
And her mouth caught like a snake's mouth, and stung
So faint and tenderly, the fang scarce clung
More than a bird's foot : yet a wound it grew,
A great one, let this red mark witness you

Under the left breast; and the stroke thereof
So clove my sense that I woke out of love
And knew not what this dream was nor had wit;
But now God knows if I have skill of it."
Hereat she laid one palm against her lips
To stop their trembling; as when water slips
Out of a beak-mouthed vessel with faint noise
And chuckles in the narrowed throat and cloys
The carven rims with murmuring, so came
Words in her lips with no word right of them.
A beaten speech thick and disconsolate,
Till his smile ceasing waxed compassionate
Of her sore fear that grew from anything—
The sound of the strong summer thickening
In heated leaves of the smooth apple-trees:
The day's breath felt about the ash-branches,
And noises of the noon whose weight still grew
On the hot heavy-headed flowers, and drew
Their red mouths open till the rose-heart ached;
For eastward all the crowding rose was slaked
And soothed with shade: but westward all its growth
Seemed to breathe hard with heat as a man doth
Who feels his temples newly feverous.
And even with such motion in her brows
As that man hath in whom sick days begin,
She turned her throat and spake, her voice being thin
As a sick man's, sudden and tremulous;
"Sweet, if this end be come indeed on us,
Let us love more;" and held his mouth with hers.
As the first sound of flooded hill-waters
Is heard by people of the meadow-grass,
Or ever a wandering waif of ruin pass
With whirling stones and foam of the brown stream
Flaked with fierce yellow: so beholding him

She felt before tears came her eyelids wet,
Saw the face deadly thin where life was yet,
Heard his throat's harsh last moan before it clomb :
And he, with close mouth passionate and dumb,
Burned at her lips : so lay they without speech,
Each grasping other, and the eyes of each
Fed in the other's face : till suddenly
He cried out with a little broken cry
This word, " O help me, sweet, I am but dead."
And even so saying, the colour of fair red
Was gone out of his face, and his blood's beat
Fell, and stark death made sharp his upward feet
And pointed hands : and without moan he died.
Pain smote her sudden in the brows and side,
Strained her lips open and made burn her eyes :
For the pure sharpness of her miseries
She had no heart's pain, but mere body's wrack ;
But at the last her beaten blood drew back
Slowly upon her face, and her stunned brows
Suddenly grown aware and piteous
Gathered themselves, her eyes shone, her hard breath
Came as though one nigh dead came back from death ;
Her lips throbbed, and life trembled through her hair.

And in brief while she thought to bury there
The dead man that her love might lie with him
In a sweet bed under the rose-roots dim
And soft earth round the branchèd apple-trees,
Full of hushed heat and heavy with great ease,
And no man entering divide him thence.
Wherefore she bade one of her handmaidens
To be her help to do upon this wise.
And saying so the tears out of her eyes
Fell without noise and comforted her heart :
Yea, her great pain eased of the sorest part

Began to soften in her sense of it.
There under all the little branches sweet
The place was shapen of his burial ;
They shed thereon no thing funereal,
But coloured leaves of latter rose-blossom,
Stems of soft grass, some withered red and some
Fair and fresh-blooded ; and spoil splendider
Of marigold and great spent sunflower.
And afterward she came back without word
To her own house ; two days went, and the third
Went, and she showed her father of this thing.
And for great grief of her soul's travailing
He gave consent she should endure in peace
Till her life's end ; yea, till her time should cease,
She should abide in fellowship of pain.
And having lived a holy year or twain
She died of pure waste heart and weariness.
And for love's honour in her love's distress
This word was written over her tomb's head ;
" Here dead she lieth, for whose sake Love is dead."

AHOLIBAH

In the beginning God made thee
A woman well to look upon,
Thy tender body as a tree
Whereon cool wind hath always blown
Till the clean branches be well grown.

There was none like thee in the land ;
The girls that were thy bondwomen
Did bind thee with a purple band
Upon thy forehead, that all men
Should know thee for God's handmaiden.

Strange raiment clad thee like a bride,
With silk to wear on hands and feet
And plates of gold on either side :
Wine made thee glad, and thou didst eat
Honey, and choice of pleasant meat.

And fishers in the middle sea
Did get thee sea-fish and sea-weeds
In colour like the robes on thee ;
And curious work of plaited reeds,
And wools wherein live purple bleeds.

And round the edges of thy cup
Men wrought thee marvels out of gold,
Strong snakes with lean throats lifted up,
Large eyes whereon the brows had hold,
And scaly things their slime kept cold.

For thee they blew soft wind in flutes
And ground sweet roots for cunning scent ;
Made slow because of many lutes,
The wind among thy chambers went
Wherein no light was violent.

God called thy name Aholibah,
His tabernacle being in thee,
A witness through waste Asia ;
Thou wert a tent sewn cunningly
With gold and colours of the sea.

God gave thee gracious ministers
And all their work who plait and weave :
The cunning of embroiderers
That sew the pillow to the sleeve,
And likeness of all things that live.

Thy garments upon thee were fair
With scarlet and with yellow thread ;
Also the weaving of thine hair
Was as fine gold upon thy head,
And thy silk shoes were sewn with red.

All sweet things he bade sift, and ground
As a man grindeth wheat in mills
With strong wheels alway going round ;
He gave thee corn, and grass that fills
The cattle on a thousand hills.

The wine of many seasons fed
Thy mouth, and made it fair and clean;
Sweet oil was poured out on thy head
And ran down like cool rain between
The strait close locks it melted in.

The strong men and the captains knew
Thy chambers wrought and fashioned
With gold and covering of blue,
And the blue raiment of thine head
Who satest on a stately bed.

All these had on their garments wrought
The shape of beasts and creeping things,
The body that availeth not,
Flat backs of worms and veinèd wings,
And the lewd bulk that sleeps and stings

Also the chosen of the years,
The multitude being at ease,
With sackbuts and with dulcimers
And noise of shawms and psalteries
Made mirth within the ears of these.

But as a common woman doth,
Thou didst think evil and devise;
The sweet smell of thy breast and mouth
Thou madest as the harlot's wise,
And there was painting on thine eyes.

Yea, in the woven guest-chamber
And by the painted passages
Where the strange gracious paintings were,
State upon state of companies,
There came on thee the lust of these.

Because of shapes on either wall
Sea-coloured from some rare blue shell
At many a Tyrian interval,
Horsemen on horses, girdled well,
Delicate and desirable,

Thou saidest : I am sick of love :
Stay me with flagons, comfort me
With apples for my pain thereof
Till my hands gather in his tree
That fruit wherein my lips would be.

Yea, saidest thou, I will go up
When there is no more shade than one
May cover with a hollow cup,
And make my bed against the sun
Till my blood's violence be done.

Thy mouth was leant upon the wall
Against the painted mouth, thy chin
Touched the hair's painted curve and fall ;
Thy deep throat, fallen lax and thin,
Worked as the blood's beat worked therein

Therefore, O thou Aholibah,
God is not glad because of thee ;
And thy fine gold shall pass away
Like those fair coins of ore that be
Washed over by the middle sea.

Then will one make thy body bare
To strip it of all gracious things,
And pluck the cover from thine hair,
And break the gift of many kings,
Thy wrist-rings and thine ankle-rings.

Likewise the man whose body joins
To thy smooth body, as was said,
Who hath a girdle on his loins
And dyed attire upon his head—
The same who, seeing, worshipped,

Because thy face was like the face
Of a clean maiden that smells sweet,
Because thy gait was as the pace
Of one that opens not her feet
And is not heard within the street—

Even he, O thou Aholibah,
Made separate from thy desire,
Shall cut thy nose and ears away
And bruise thee for thy body's hire
And burn the residue with fire.

Then shall the heathen people say,
The multitude being at ease;
Lo, this is that Aholibah
Whose name was blown among strange seas,
Grown old with soft adulteries.

Also her bed was made of green,
Her windows beautiful for glass
That she had made her bed between:
Yea, for pure lust her body was
Made like white summer-coloured grass.

Her raiment was a strong man's spoil;
Upon a table by a bed
She set mine incense and mine oil
To be the beauty of her head
In chambers walled about with red.

Also between the walls she had
Fair faces of strong men portrayed ;
All girded round the loins, and clad
With several cloths of woven braid
And garments marvellously made.

Therefore the wrath of God shall be
Set as a watch upon her way ;
And whoso findeth by the sea
Blown dust of bones will hardly say
If this were that Aholibah.

LOVE AND SLEEP

LYING asleep between the strokes of night
I saw my love lean over my sad bed,
Pale as the duskiest lily's leaf or head,
Smooth-skinned and dark, with bare throat made to bite,
Too wan for blushing and too warm for white,
But perfect-coloured without white or red.
And her lips opened amorously, and said—
I wist not what, saving one word—Delight.
And all her face was honey to my mouth,
And all her body pasture to mine eyes;
The long lithe arms and hotter hands than fire,
The quivering flanks, hair smelling of the south,
The bright light feet, the splendid supple thighs
And glittering eyelids of my soul's desire.

MADONNA MIA

Under green apple-boughs
That never a storm will rouse,
My lady hath her house
  Between two bowers;
In either of the twain
Red roses full of rain;
She hath for bondwomen
  All kind of flowers.

She hath no handmaid fair
To draw her curled gold hair
Through rings of gold that bear
  Her whole hair's weight;
She hath no maids to stand
Gold-clothed on either hand;
In all the great green land
  None is so great.

She hath no more to wear
But one white hood of vair
Drawn over eyes and hair,
  Wrought with strange gold,
Made for some great queen's head,
Some fair great queen since dead;
And one strait gown of red
  Against the cold.

Beneath her eyelids deep
Love lying seems asleep,
Love, swift to wake, to weep,
To laugh, to gaze ;
Her breasts are like white birds
And all her gracious words
As water-grass to herds
In the June-days.

To her all dews that fall
And rains are musical ;
Her flowers are fed from all,
Her joy from these ;
In the deep-feathered firs
Their gift of joy is hers,
In the least breath that stirs
Across the trees.

She grows with greenest leaves,
Ripens with reddest sheaves,
Forgets, remembers, grieves,
And is not sad ;
The quiet lands and skies
Leave light upon her eyes ;
None knows her, weak or wise,
Or tired or glad.

None knows, none understands,
What flowers are like her hands ;
Though you should search all lands
Wherein time grows,
What snows are like her feet,
Though his eyes burn with heat
Through gazing on my sweet,
Yet no man knows.

Only this thing is said;
That white and gold and red,
God's three chief words, man's bread
And oil and wine,
Were given her for dowers,
And kingdom of all hours,
And grace of goodly flowers
And various vine.

This is my lady's praise:
God after many days
Wrought her in unknown ways,
In sunset lands;
This was my lady's birth;
God gave her might and mirth
And laid his whole sweet earth
Between her hands.

Under deep apple-boughs
My lady hath her house;
She wears upon her brows
The flower thereof;
All saying but what God saith
To her is as vain breath;
She is more strong than death,
Being strong as love.

THE KING'S DAUGHTER

We were ten maidens in the green corn,
Small red leaves in the mill-water:
Fairer maidens never were born,
Apples of gold for the king's daughter.

We were ten maidens by a well-head,
Small white birds in the mill-water:
Sweeter maidens never were wed,
Rings of red for the king's daughter.

The first to spin, the second to sing,
Seeds of wheat in the mill-water;
The third may was a goodly thing,
White bread and brown for the king's daughter.

The fourth to sew and the fifth to play,
Fair green weed in the mill-water;
The sixth may was a goodly may,
White wine and red for the king's daughter.

The seventh to woo, the eighth to wed,
Fair thin reeds in the mill-water;
The ninth had gold work on her head,
Honey in the comb for the king's daughter.

The ninth had gold work round her hair,
Fallen flowers in the mill-water ;
The tenth may was goodly and fair,
Golden gloves for the king's daughter.

We were ten maidens in a field green,
Fallen fruit in the mill-water ;
Fairer maidens never have been,
Golden sleeves for the king's daughter.

By there comes the king's young son,
A little wind in the mill-water ;
" Out of ten maidens ye'll grant me one,"
A crown of red for the king's daughter.

" Out of ten mays ye'll give me the best,"
A little rain in the mill-water ;
A bed of yellow straw for all the rest,
A bed of gold for the king's daughter.

He's ta'en out the goodliest,
Rain that rains in the mill-water ;
A comb of yellow shell for all the rest,
A comb of gold for the king's daughter.

He's made her bed to the goodliest,
Wind and hail in the mill-water ;
A grass girdle for all the rest,
A girdle of arms for the king's daughter.

He's set his heart to the goodliest,
Snow that snows in the mill-water ;
Nine little kisses for all the rest,
An hundredfold for the king's daughter.

He's ta'en his leave at the goodliest,
Broken boats in the mill-water ;
Golden gifts for all the rest,
Sorrow of heart for the king's daughter.

"Ye'll make a grave for my fair body,"
Running rain in the mill-water ;
"And ye'll streek my brother at the side of me,"
The pains of hell for the king's daughter.

AFTER DEATH

The four boards of the coffin lid
Heard all the dead man did.

The first curse was in his mouth,
Made of grave's mould and deadly drouth.

The next curse was in his head,
Made of God's work discomfited.

The next curse was in his hands,
Made out of two grave-bands.

The next curse was in his feet,
Made out of a grave-sheet.

"I had fair coins red and white,
And my name was as great light;

I had fair clothes green and red,
And strong gold bound round my head.

But no meat comes in my mouth,
Now I fare as the worm doth;

And no gold binds in my hair,
Now I fare as the blind fare.

My live thews were of great strength,
Now am I waxen a span's length;

My live sides were full of lust,
Now are they dried with dust."

The first board spake and said:
"Is it best eating flesh or bread?"

The second answered it:
"Is wine or honey the more sweet?"

The third board spake and said:
"Is red gold worth a girl's gold head?"

The fourth made answer thus:
"All these things are as one with us."

The dead man asked of them:
"Is the green land stained brown with flame?

Have they hewn my son for beasts to eat,
And my wife's body for beasts' meat?

Have they boiled my maid in a brass pan,
And built a gallows to hang my man?"

The boards said to him:
"This is a lewd thing that ye deem.

Your wife has gotten a golden bed,
All the sheets are sewn with red.

Your son has gotten a coat of silk,
The sleeves are soft as curded milk.

Your maid has gotten a kirtle new,
All the skirt has braids of blue.

Your man has gotten both ring and glove,
Wrought well for eyes to love."

The dead man answered thus :
" What good gift shall God give us ? "

The boards answered him anon :
" Flesh to feed hell's worm upon."

MAY JANET

(BRETON)

"STAND up, stand up, thou May Janet,
And go to the wars with me."
He's drawn her by both hands
With her face against the sea.

"He that strews red shall gather white,
He that sows white reap red,
Before your face and my daughter's
Meet in a marriage-bed.

"Gold coin shall grow in the yellow field,
Green corn in the green sea-water,
And red fruit grow of the rose's red,
Ere your fruit grow in her."

"But I shall have her by land," he said,
"Or I shall have her by sea,
Or I shall have her by strong treason
And no grace go with me."

Her father's drawn her by both hands,
He's rent her gown from her,
He's ta'en the smock round her body,
Cast in the sea-water.

The captain's drawn her by both sides
  Out of the fair green sea ;
" Stand up, stand up, thou May Janet,
  And come to the war with me."

The first town they came to
  There was a blue bride-chamber ;
He clothed her on with silk
  And belted her with amber.

The second town they came to
  The bridesmen feasted knee to knee ;
He clothed her on with silver,
  A stately thing to see.

The third town they came to
  The bridesmaids all had gowns of gold ;
He clothed her on with purple,
  A rich thing to behold.

The last town they came to
  He clothed her white and red,
With a green flag either side of her
  And a gold flag overhead.

THE BLOODY SON

(FINNISH)

"O WHERE have ye been the morn sae late,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
O where have ye been the morn sae late?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"By the water-gate, by the water-gate,
O dear mither."

"And whatten kin' o' wark had ye there to make,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And whatten kin' o' wark had ye there to make?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"I watered my steeds with water frae the lake,
O dear mither."

"Why is your coat sae fouled the day,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
Why is your coat sae fouled the day?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"The steeds were stamping sair by the weary banks
of clay,
O dear mither."

"And where gat ye thae sleeves of red,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And where gat ye thae sleeves of red?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"I have slain my ae brither by the weary water-head,
O dear mither."

"And where will ye gang to mak your mend,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And where will ye gang to mak your mend?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"The warldis way, to the warldis end,
O dear mither."

'And what will ye leave your father dear,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave your father dear?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"The wood to fell and the logs to bear,
For he'll never see my body mair,
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave your mither dear,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave your mither dear?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"The wool to card and the wool to wear,
For ye'll never see my body mair,
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave for your wife to take,
My merry son, come tell me hither?

And what will ye leave for your wife to take?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"A goodly gown and a fair new make,
For she'll do nae mair for my body's sake,
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave your young son fair,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave your young son fair?
And I wot ye hae not anither."
"A twiggen school-rod for his body to bear,
Though it garred him greet he'll get nae mair,
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave your little daughter sweet,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave your little daughter sweet?
And I wot ye hae not anither."
"Wild mulberries for her mouth to eat,
She'll get nae mair though it garred her greet,
O dear mither."

"And when will ye come back frae roamin',
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And when will ye come back frae roamin'?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"When the sunrise out of the north is comen,
O dear mither."

"When shall the sunrise on the north side be,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
When shall the sunrise on the north side be?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"When chuckie-stanes shall swim in the sea,
O dear mither."

"When shall stanes in the sea swim,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
When shall stanes in the sea swim?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"When birdies' feathers are as lead therein,
O dear mither."

"When shall feathers be as lead,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
When shall feathers be as lead?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"When God shall judge between the quick and dead,
O dear mither."

THE SEA-SWALLOWS

THIS fell when Christmas lights were done,
(Red rose leaves will never make wine)
But before the Easter lights begun;
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

Two lovers sat where the rowan blows
And all the grass is heavy and fine,
By the gathering-place of the sea-swallows
When the wind brings them over Tyne.

Blossom of broom will never make bread,
Red rose leaves will never make wine;
Between her brows she is grown red,
That was full white in the fields by Tyne.

"O what is this thing ye have on,
Show me now, sweet daughter of mine?"
"O father, this is my little son
That I found hid in the sides of Tyne.

"O what will ye give my son to eat,
Red rose leaves will never make wine?"
"Fen-water and adder's meat."
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"Or what will ye get my son to wear?"
(Red rose leaves will never make wine.)
"A weed and a web of nettle's hair."
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"Or what will ye take to line his bed?"
(Red rose leaves will never make wine.)
"Two black stones at the kirkwall's head."
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"Or what will ye give my son for land?"
(Red rose leaves will never make wine.)
"Three girl's paces of red sand."
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"Or what will ye give me for my son?"
(Red rose leaves will never make wine.)
"Six times to kiss his young mouth on."
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"But what have ye done with the bearing-bread,
And what have ye made of the washing-wine?
Or where have ye made your bearing-bed,
To bear a son in the sides of Tyne?"

"The bearing-bread is soft and new,
There is no soil in the straining wine;
The bed was made between green and blue,
It stands full soft by the sides of Tyne.

"The fair grass was my bearing-bread,
The well-water my washing-wine;
The low leaves were my bearing-bed,
And that was best in the sides of Tyne."

"O daughter, if ye have done this thing,
I wot the greater grief is mine ;
This was a bitter child-bearing,
When ye were got by the sides of Tyne.

"About the time of sea-swallows
That fly full thick by six and nine,
Ye'll have my body out of the house,
To bury me by the sides of Tyne.

"Set nine stones by the wall for twain,"
(Red rose leaves will never make wine)
"For the bed I take will measure ten."
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne

"Tread twelve girl's paces out for three,"
(Red rose leaves will never make wine)
"For the pit I made has taken me."
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

THE YEAR OF LOVE

THERE were four loves that one by one,
Following the seasons and the sun,
Passed over without tears, and fell
Away without farewell.

The first was made of gold and tears,
The next of aspen-leaves and fears,
The third of rose-boughs and rose-roots,
The last love of strange fruits.

These were the four loves faded. Hold
Some minutes fast the time of gold
When our lips each way clung and clove
To a face full of love.

The tears inside our eyelids met,
Wrung forth with kissing, and wept wet
The faces cleaving each to each
Where the blood served for speech.

The second, with low patient brows
Bound under aspen-coloured boughs
And eyes made strong and grave with sleep
And yet too weak to weep—

The third, with eager mouth at ease
Fed from late autumn honey, lees
Of scarce gold left in latter cells
With scattered flower-smells—

Hair sprinkled over with spoilt sweet
Of ruined roses, wrists and feet
Slight-swathed, as grassy-girdled sheaves
Hold in stray poppy-leaves—

The fourth, with lips whereon has bled
Some great pale fruit's slow colour, shed
From the rank bitten husk whence drips
Faint blood between her lips—

Made of the heat of whole great Junes
Burning the blue dark round their moons
(Each like a mown red marigold)
So hard the flame keeps hold—

These are burnt thoroughly away.
Only the first holds out a day
Beyond these latter loves that were
Made of mere heat and air.

And now the time is winterly
The first love fades too : none will see,
When April warms the world anew,
The place wherein love grew.

DEDICATION

1865

THE sea gives her shells to the shingle,
The earth gives her streams to the sea;
They are many, but my gift is single,
My verses, the firstfruits of me.
Let the wind take the green and the grey leaf,
Cast forth without fruit upon air;
Take rose-leaf and vine-leaf and bay-leaf
Blown loose from the hair.

The night shakes them round me in legions,
Dawn drives them before her like dreams;
Time sheds them like snows on strange regions,
Swept shoreward on infinite streams;
Leaves pallid and sombre and ruddy,
Dead fruits of the fugitive years;
Some stained as with wine and made bloody,
And some as with tears.

Some scattered in seven years' traces,
As they fell from the boy that was then;
Long left among idle green places,
Or gathered but now among men;

On seas full of wonder and peril,
  Blown white round the capes of the north ;
Or in islands where myrtles are sterile
  And loves bring not forth.

O daughters of dreams and of stories
  That life is not wearied of yet,
Faustine, Fragoletta, Dolores,
  Félise and Yolande and Juliette,
Shall I find you not still, shall I miss you,
  When sleep, that is true or that seems,
Comes back to me hopeless to kiss you,
  O daughters of dreams?

They are past as a slumber that passes,
  As the dew of a dawn of old time ;
More frail than the shadows on glasses,
  More fleet than a wave or a rhyme.
As the waves after ebb drawing seaward,
  When their hollows are full of the night,
So the birds that flew singing to me-ward
  Recede out of sight.

The songs of dead seasons, that wander
  On wings of articulate words ;
Lost leaves that the shore-wind may squander,
  Light flocks of untameable birds ;
Some sang to me dreaming in class-time
  And truant in hand as in tongue ;
For the youngest were born of boy's pastime,
  The eldest are young.

Is there shelter while life in them lingers,
  Is there hearing for songs that recede,

Tunes touched from a harp with man's fingers
Or blown with boy's mouth in a reed?
Is there place in the land of your labour,
Is there room in your world of delight,
Where change has not sorrow for neighbour
And day has not night?

In their wings though the sea-wind yet quivers,
Will you spare not a space for them there
Made green with the running of rivers
And gracious with temperate air;
In the fields and the turreted cities,
That cover from sunshine and rain
Fair passions and bountiful pities
And loves without stain?

In a land of clear colours and stories,
In a region of shadowless hours,
Where earth has a garment of glories
And a murmur of musical flowers;
In woods where the spring half uncovers
The flush of her amorous face,
By the waters that listen for lovers,
For these is there place?

For the song-birds of sorrow, that muffle
Their music as clouds do their fire:
For the storm-birds of passion, that ruffle
Wild wings in a wind of desire;
In the stream of the storm as it settles
Blown seaward, borne far from the sun,
Shaken loose on the darkness like petals
Dropt one after one?

Though the world of your hands be more gracious
And lovelier in lordship of things
Clothed round by sweet art with the spacious
Warm heaven of her imminent wings,
Let them enter, unfledged and nigh fainting,
For the love of old loves and lost times;
And receive in your palace of painting
This revel of rhymes.

Though the seasons of man full of losses
Make empty the years full of youth,
If but one thing be constant in crosses,
Change lays not her hand upon truth;
Hopes die, and their tombs are for token
That the grief as the joy of them ends
Ere time that breaks all men has broken
The faith between friends.

Though the many lights dwindle to one light,
There is help if the heaven has one;
Though the skies be discrowned of the sunlight
And the earth dispossessed of the sun,
They have moonlight and sleep for repayment,
When, refreshed as a bride and set free,
With stars and sea-winds in her raiment,
Night sinks on the sea.

POEMS AND BALLADS

SECOND SERIES

INSCRIBED

TO

RICHARD F. BURTON

IN REDEMPTION OF AN OLD PLEDGE AND

IN RECOGNITION OF A FRIENDSHIP WHICH I MUST ALWAYS COUNT

AMONG THE HIGHEST HONOURS OF MY LIFE

THE LAST ORACLE

(A.D. 361)

εἴπατε τῷ βασιλῆϊ, χαμαὶ πέσε δαίδαλος αὐλά·
οὐκέτι Φοῖβος ἔχει καλύβαν, οὐ μάντιδα δάφνην,
οὐ παγὰν λαλέουσαν · ἀπέσβετο καὶ λάλον ὕδωρ.

YEARS have risen and fallen in darkness or in twilight,
Ages waxed and waned that knew not thee nor thine,
While the world sought light by night and sought not thy light,
Since the sad last pilgrim left thy dark mid shrine.
Dark the shrine and dumb the fount of song thence welling,
Save for words more sad than tears of blood, that said:
Tell the king, on earth has fallen the glorious dwelling,
And the watersprings that spake are quenched and dead.
Not a cell is left the God, no roof, no cover
In his hand the prophet laurel flowers no more.
And the great king's high sad heart, thy true last lover,
Felt thine answer pierce and cleave it to the core.
And he bowed down his hopeless head
In the drift of the wild world's tide,
And dying, *Thou hast conquered*, he said,
Galilean; he said it, and died.

And the world that was thine and was ours
When the Graces took hands with the Hours
Grew cold as a winter wave
In the wind from a wide-mouthed grave,
As a gulf wide open to swallow
The light that the world held dear.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear !

Age on age thy mouth was mute, thy face was hidden,
And the lips and eyes that loved thee blind and dumb ;
Song forsook their tongues that held thy name forbidden,
Light their eyes that saw the strange God's kingdom come.
Fire for light and hell for heaven and psalms for pæans
Filled the clearest eyes and lips most sweet of song,
When for chant of Greeks the wail of Galileans
Made the whole world moan with hymns of wrath and wrong.
Yea, not yet we see thee, father, as they saw thee,
They that worshipped when the world was theirs and thine,
They whose words had power by thine own power to draw thee
Down from heaven till earth seemed more than heaven divine.
For the shades are about us that hover
When darkness is half withdrawn
And the skirts of the dead night cover
The face of the live new dawn.

For the past is not utterly past
Though the word on its lips be the last,
And the time be gone by with its creed
When men were as beasts that bleed,
As sheep or as swine that wallow,
In the shambles of faith and of fear.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Yet it may be, lord and father, could we know it,
We that love thee for our darkness shall have light
More than ever prophet hailed of old or poet
Standing crowned and robed and sovereign in thy sight.
To the likeness of one God their dreams enthralled thee,
Who wast greater than all Gods that waned and grew;
Son of God the shining son of Time they called thee,
Who wast older, O our father, than they knew.
For no thought of man made Gods to love or honour
Ere the song within the silent soul began,
Nor might earth in dream or deed take heaven upon her
Till the word was clothed with speech by lips of man.
And the word and the life wast thou,
The spirit of man and the breath;
And before thee the Gods that bow
Take life at thine hands and death.
For these are as ghosts that wane,
That are gone in an age or twain;
Harsh, merciful, passionate, pure,
They perish, but thou shalt endure;

Be their flight with the swan or the swallow,
They pass as the flight of a year.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Thou the word, the light, the life, the breath, the glory,
Strong to help and heal, to lighten and to slay,
Thine is all the song of man, the world's whole story;
Not of morning and of evening is thy day.
Old and younger Gods are buried or begotten
From uprising to downsetting of thy sun,
Risen from eastward, fallen to westward and forgotten,
And their springs are many, but their end is one.
Divers births of godheads find one death appointed,
As the soul whence each was born makes room for each;
God by God goes out, discrowned and disanointed,
But the soul stands fast that gave them shape and speech.
Is the sun yet cast out of heaven?
Is the song yet cast out of man?
Life that had song for its leaven
To quicken the blood that ran
Through the veins of the songless years
More bitter and cold than tears,
Heaven that had thee for its one
Light, life, word, witness, O sun,
Are they soundless and sightless and hollow,
Without eye, without speech, without ear?
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Time arose and smote thee silent at his warning,
Change and darkness fell on men that fell from thee ;
Dark thou satest, veiled with light, behind the morning,
Till the soul of man should lift up eyes and see.
Till the blind mute soul get speech again and eyesight,
Man may worship not the light of life within ;
In his sight the stars whose fires grow dark in thy sight
Shine as sunbeams on the night of death and sin.
Time again is risen with mightier word of warning,
Change hath blown again a blast of louder breath ;
Clothed with clouds and stars and dreams that melt in morning,
Lo, the Gods that ruled by grace of sin and death!
They are conquered, they break, they are stricken,
Whose might made the whole world pale ;
They are dust that shall rise not or quicken
Though the world for their death's sake wail.
As a hound on a wild beast's trace,
So time has their godhead in chase ;
As wolves when the hunt makes head,
They are scattered, they fly, they are fled ;
They are fled beyond hail, beyond hollo,
And the cry of the chase, and the cheer.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear !

Day by day thy shadow shines in heaven beholden,
Even the sun, the shining shadow of thy face :

King, the ways of heaven before thy feet grow golden ;
God, the soul of earth is kindled with thy grace.
In thy lips the speech of man whence Gods were fashioned,
In thy soul the thought that makes them and unmakes ;
By thy light and heat incarnate and impassioned,
Soul to soul of man gives light for light and takes.
As they knew thy name of old time could we know it,
Healer called of sickness, slayer invoked of wrong,
Light of eyes that saw thy light, God, king, priest, poet,
Song should bring thee back to heal us with thy song.
For thy kingdom is past not away,
Nor thy power from the place thereof hurled ;
Out of heaven they shall cast not the day,
They shall cast not out song from the world.
By the song and the light they give
We know thy works that they live ;
With the gift thou hast given us of speech
We praise, we adore, we beseech,
We arise at thy bidding and follow,
We cry to thee, answer, appear,
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear !

IN THE BAY

I

Beyond the hollow sunset, ere a star
Take heart in heaven from eastward, while the west,
Fulfilled of watery resonance and rest,
Is as a port with clouds for harbour bar
To fold the fleet in of the winds from far
That stir no plume now of the bland sea's breast :

II

Above the soft sweep of the breathless bay
Southwestward, far past flight of night and day,
Lower than the sunken sunset sinks, and higher
Than dawn can freak the front of heaven with fire,
My thought with eyes and wings made wide makes way
To find the place of souls that I desire.

III

If any place for any soul there be,
Disrobed and disentrammelled ; if the might,
The fire and force that filled with ardent light
The souls whose shadow is half the light we see,
Survive and be suppressed not of the night ;
This hour should show what all day hid from me.

IV

Night knows not, neither is it shown to day,
By sunlight nor by starlight is it shown,
Nor to the full moon's eye nor footfall known,
Their world's untrodden and unkindled way.
Nor is the breath nor music of it blown
With sounds of winter or with winds of May.

V

But here, where light and darkness reconciled
Hold earth between them as a weanling child
Between the balanced hands of death and birth,
Even as they held the new-born shape of earth
When first life trembled in her limbs and smiled,
Here hope might think to find what hope were worth.

VI

Past Hades, past Elysium, past the long
Slow smooth strong lapse of Lethe—past the toil
Wherein all souls are taken as a spoil,
The Stygian web of waters—if your song
Be quenched not, O our brethren, but be strong
As ere ye too shook off our temporal coil;

VII

If yet these twain survive your worldly breath,
Joy trampling sorrow, life devouring death,
If perfect life possess your life all through
And like your words your souls be deathless too,
To-night, of all whom night encompasseth,
My soul would commune with one soul of you.

VIII

Above the sunset might I see thine eyes
That were above the sundawn in our skies,
Son of the songs of morning,—thine that were
First lights to lighten that rekindling air
Wherethrough men saw the front of England rise
And heard thine loudest of the lyre-notes there—

IX

If yet thy fire have not one spark the less,
O Titan, born of her a Titaness,
Across the sunrise and the sunset's mark
Send of thy lyre one sound, thy fire one spark,
To change this face of our unworthiness,
Across this hour dividing light from dark.

X

To change this face of our chill time, that hears
No song like thine of all that crowd its ears,
Of all its lights that lighten all day long
Sees none like thy most fleet and fiery sphere's
Outlightening Sirius—in its twilight throng
No thunder and no sunrise like thy song.

XI

Hath not the sea-wind swept the sea-line bare
To pave with stainless fire through stainless air
A passage for thine heavenlier feet to tread
Ungrieved of earthly floor-work? hath it spread
No covering splendid as the sun-god's hair
To veil or to reveal thy lordlier head?

XII

Hath not the sunset strewn across the sea
A way majestical enough for thee?
What hour save this should be thine hour—and mine,
If thou have care of any less divine
Than thine own soul; if thou take thought of me,
Marlowe, as all my soul takes thought of thine?

XIII

Before the moon's face as before the sun
The morning star and evening star are one
For all men's lands as England. O, if night
Hang hard upon us,—ere our day take flight,
Shed thou some comfort from thy day long done
On us pale children of the latter light!

XIV

For surely, brother and master and lord and king,
Where'er thy footfall and thy face make spring
In all souls' eyes that meet thee wheresoe'er,
And have thy soul for sunshine and sweet air—
Some late love of thine old live land should cling,
Some living love of England, round thee there.

XV

Here from her shore across her sunniest sea
My soul makes question of the sun for thee,
And waves and beams make answer. When thy feet
Made her ways flowerier and their flowers more
sweet
With childlike passage of a god to be,
Like spray these waves cast off her foemen's fleet.

XVI

Like foam they flung it from her, and like weed
Its wrecks were washed from scornful shoal to shoal,
From rock to rock reverberate ; and the whole
Sea laughed and lightened with a deathless deed
That sowed our enemies in her field for seed
And made her shores fit harbourage for thy soul.

XVII

Then in her green south fields, a poor man's child,
Thou hadst thy short sweet fill of half-blown joy,
That ripens all of us for time to cloy
With full-blown pain and passion ; ere the wild
World caught thee by the fiery heart, and smiled
To make so swift end of the godlike boy.

XVIII

For thou, if ever godlike foot there trod
These fields of ours, wert surely like a god.
Who knows what splendour of strange dreams was shed
With sacred shadow and glimmer of gold and red
From hallowed windows, over stone and sod,
On thine unbowed bright insubmissive head ?

XIX

The shadow stayed not, but the splendour stays,
Our brother, till the last of English days.
No day nor night on English earth shall be
For ever, spring nor summer, Junes nor Mays,
But somewhat as a sound or gleam of thee
Shall come on us like morning from the sea.

XX

Like sunrise never wholly risen, nor yet
Quenched ; or like sunset never wholly set,
A light to lighten as from living eyes
The cold unlit close lids of one that lies
Dead, or a ray returned from death's far skies
To fire us living lest our lives forget.

XXI

For in that heaven what light of lights may be,
What splendour of what stars, what spheres of flame
Sounding, that none may number nor may name,
We know not, even thy brethren ; yea, not we
Whose eyes desire the light that lightened thee,
Whose ways and thine are one way and the same.

XXII

But if the riddles that in sleep we read,
And trust them not, be flattering truth indeed,
As he that rose our mightiest called them,—he,
Much higher than thou as thou much higher than we—
There, might we say, all flower of all our seed,
All singing souls are as one sounding sea.

XXIII

All those that here were of thy kind and kin,
Beside thee and below thee, full of love,
Full-souled for song,—and one alone above
Whose only light folds all your glories in—
With all birds' notes from nightingale to dove
Fill the world whither we too fain would win.

XXIV

The world that sees in heaven the sovereign light
Of sunlike Shakespeare, and the fiery night
Whose stars were watched of Webster ; and beneath,
The twin-souled brethren of the single wreath,
Grown in kings' gardens, plucked from pastoral heath,
Wrought with all flowers for all men's heart's delight.

XXV

And that fixed fervour, iron-red like Mars,
In the mid moving tide of tenderer stars,
That burned on loves and deeds the darkest done,
Athwart the incestuous prisoner's bride-house bars ;
And thine, most highest of all their fires but one,
Our morning star, sole risen before the sun.

XXVI

And one light risen since theirs to run such race
Thou hast seen, O Phosphor, from thy pride of place,
Thou hast seen Shelley, him that was to thee
As light to fire or dawn to lightning ; me,
Me likewise, O our brother, shalt thou see,
And I behold thee, face to glorious face ?

XXVII

You twain the same swift year of manhood swept
Down the steep darkness, and our father wept.
And from the gleam of Apollonian tears
A holier aureole rounds your memories, kept
Most fervent-fresh of all the singing spheres,
And April-coloured through all months and years.

XXVIII

You twain fate spared not half your fiery span;
The longer date fulfils the lesser man.
Ye from beyond the dark dividing date
Stand smiling, crowned as gods with foot on fate.
For stronger was your blessing than his ban,
And earliest whom he struck, he struck too late.

XXIX

Yet love and loathing, faith and unfaith yet
Bind less to greater souls in unison,
And one desire that makes three spirits as one
Takes great and small as in one spiritual net
Woven out of hope toward what shall yet be done
Ere hate or love remember or forget.

XXX

Woven out of faith and hope and love too great
To bear the bonds of life and death and fate:
Woven out of love and hope and faith too dear
To take the print of doubt and change and fear:
And interwoven with lines of wrath and hate
Blood-red with soils of many a sanguine year.

XXXI

Who cannot hate, can love not; if he grieve,
His tears are barren as the unfruitful rain
That rears no harvest from the green sea's plain,
And as thorns crackling this man's laugh is vain.
Nor can belief touch, kindle, smite, reprieve
His heart who has not heart to disbelieve.

XXXII

But you, most perfect in your hate and love,
Our great twin-spirited brethren ; you that stand
Head by head glittering, hand made fast in hand,
And underfoot the fang-drawn worm that strove
To wound you living ; from so far above,
Look love, not scorn, on ours that was your land.

XXXIII

For love we lack, and help and heat and light
To clothe us and to comfort us with might.
What help is ours to take or give ? but ye—
O, more than sunrise to the blind cold sea,
That wailed aloud with all her waves all night,
Much more, being much more glorious, should you be.

XXXIV

As fire to frost, as ease to toil, as dew
To flowerless fields, as sleep to slackening pain,
As hope to souls long weaned from hope again
Returning, or as blood revived anew
To dry-drawn limbs and every pulseless vein,
Even so toward us should no man be but you.

XXXV

One rose before the sunrise was, and one
Before the sunset, lovelier than the sun.
And now the heaven is dark and bright and loud
With wind and starry drift and moon and cloud,
And night's cry rings in straining sheet and shroud,
What help is ours if hope like yours be none ?

XXXVI

O well-beloved, our brethren, if ye be,
Then are we not forsaken. This kind earth
Made fragrant once for all time with your birth,
And bright for all men with your love, and worth
The clasp and kiss and wedlock of the sea,
Were not your mother if not your brethren we.

XXXVII

Because the days were dark with gods and kings
And in time's hand the old hours of time as rods,
When force and fear set hope and faith at odds,
Ye failed not nor abased your plume-plucked wings;
And we that front not more disastrous things,
How should we fail in face of kings and gods?

XXXVIII

For now the deep dense plumes of night are thinned
Surely with winnowing of the glimmering wind
Whose feet are fledged with morning; and the breath
Begins in heaven that sings the dark to death.
And all the night wherein men groaned and sinned
Sickens at heart to hear what sundawn saith.

XXXIX

O first-born sons of hope and fairest, ye
Whose prows first clove the thought-unsounded sea
Whence all the dark dead centuries rose to bar
The spirit of man lest truth should make him free,
The sunrise and the sunset, seeing one star,
Take heart as we to know you that ye are.

XL

Ye rise not and ye set not ; we that say
Ye rise and set like hopes that set and rise
Look yet but seaward from a land-locked bay ;
But where at last the sea's line is the sky's
And truth and hope one sunlight in your eyes,
No sunrise and no sunset marks their day.

A FORSAKEN GARDEN

In a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between windward and lee,
Walled round with rocks as an inland island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.
A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses
The steep square slope of the blossomless bed
Where the weeds that grew green from the graves of its roses
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,
To the low last edge of the long lone land.
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,
Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand?
So long have the grey bare walks lain guestless,
Through branches and briars if a man make way,
He shall find no life but the sea-wind's, restless
Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled
That crawls by a track none turn to climb
To the strait waste place that the years have rifled
Of all but the thorns that are touched not of time.
The thorns he spares when the rose is taken;
The rocks are left when he wastes the plain.
The wind that wanders, the weeds wind-shaken,
These remain.

Not a flower to be pressed of the foot that falls not ;
As the heart of a dead man the seed-plots are dry ;
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls not,
Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.
Over the meadows that blossom and wither
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song ;
Only the sun and the rain come hither
All year long.

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels
One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.
Only the wind here hovers and revels
In a round where life seems barren as death.
Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,
Haply, of lovers none ever will know,
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping
Years ago.

Heart handfast in heart as they stood, "Look thither,"
Did he whisper? "look forth from the flowers to the sea ;
For the foam-flowers endure when the rose-blossoms wither,
And men that love lightly may die—but we?"
And the same wind sang and the same waves whitened,
And or ever the garden's last petals were shed,
In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had lightened,
Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then went whither?
And were one to the end—but what end who knows?
Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.
Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?
What love was ever as deep as a grave?
They are loveless now as the grass above them
Or the wave.

All are at one now, roses and lovers,
Not known of the cliffs and the fields and the sea.
Not a breath of the time that has been hovers
In the air now soft with a summer to be.
Not a breath shall there sweeten the seasons hereafter
Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh now or weep,
When as they that are free now of weeping and laughter
We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again for ever;
Here change may come not till all change end.
From the graves they have made they shall rise up never,
Who have left nought living to ravage and rend.
Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild ground growing,
While the sun and the rain live, these shall be;
Till a last wind's breath upon all these blowing
Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble
The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink,
Here now in his triumph where all things falter,
Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,
As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,
Death lies dead.

RELICS

This flower that smells of honey and the sea,
White laurustine, seems in my hand to be
A white star made of memory long ago
Lit in the heaven of dear times dead to me.

A star out of the skies love used to know
Here held in hand, a stray left yet to show
What flowers my heart was full of in the days
That are long since gone down dead memory's flow.

Dead memory that revives on doubtful ways,
Half hearkening what the buried season says
Out of the world of the unapparent dead
Where the lost Aprils are, and the lost Mays.

Flower, once I knew thy star-white brethren bred
Nigh where the last of all the land made head
Against the sea, a keen-faced promontory,
Flowers on salt wind and sprinkled sea-dews fed.

Their hearts were glad of the free place's glory;
The wind that sang them all his stormy story
Had talked all winter to the sleepless spray,
And as the sea's their hues were hard and hoary.

Like things born of the sea and the bright day,
They laughed out at the years that could not slay,
  Live sons and joyous of unquiet hours,
And stronger than all storms that range for prey.

And in the close indomitable flowers
A keen-edged odour of the sun and showers
  Was as the smell of the fresh honeycomb
Made sweet for mouths of none but paramours.

Out of the hard green wall of leaves that clomb
They showed like windfalls of the snow-soft foam,
  Or feathers from the weary south-wind's wing,
Fair as the spray that it came shoreward from.

And thou, as white, what word hast thou to bring?
If my heart hearken, whereof wilt thou sing?
  For some sign surely thou too hast to bear,
Some word far south was taught thee of the spring.

White like a white rose, not like these that were
Taught of the wind's mouth and the winter air,
  Poor tender thing of soft Italian bloom,
Where once thou grewest, what else for me grew
    there?

Born in what spring and on what city's tomb,
By whose hand wast thou reached, and plucked for
    whom?
  There hangs about thee, could the soul's sense tell,
An odour as of love and of love's doom.

Of days more sweet than thou wast sweet to smell,
Of flower-soft thoughts that came to flower and fell,
  Of loves that lived a lily's life and died,
Of dreams now dwelling where dead roses dwell.

O white birth of the golden mountain-side
That for the sun's love makes its bosom wide
  At sunrise, and with all its woods and flowers
Takes in the morning to its heart of pride !

Thou hast a word of that one land of ours,
And of the fair town called of the Fair Towers,
  A word for me of my San Gimignan,
A word of April's greenest-girdled hours.

Of the old breached walls whereon the wallflowers ran
Called of Saint Fina, breachless now of man,
  Though time with soft feet break them stone by
    stone,
Who breaks down hour by hour his own reign's span.

Of the old cliff overcome and overgrown
That all that flowerage clothed as flesh clothes bone,
  That garment of acacias made for May,
Whereof here lies one witness overblown.

The fair brave trees with all their flowers at play,
How king-like they stood up into the day !
  How sweet the day was with them, and the night !
Such words of message have dead flowers to say.

This that the winter and the wind made bright,
And this that lived upon Italian light,
  Before I throw them and these words away,
Who knows but I what memories too take flight ?

AT A MONTH'S END

The night last night was strange and shaken :
More strange the change of you and me.
Once more, for the old love's love forsaken,
We went out once more toward the sea.

For the old love's love-sake dead and buried,
One last time, one more and no more,
We watched the waves set in, the serried
Spears of the tide storming the shore.

Hardly we saw the high moon hanging,
Heard hardly through the windy night
Far waters ringing, low reefs clanging,
Under wan skies and waste white light.

With chafe and change of surges chiming,
The clashing channels rocked and rang
Large music, wave to wild wave timing,
And all the choral water sang.

Faint lights fell this way, that way floated,
Quick sparks of sea-fire keen like eyes
From the rolled surf that flashed, and noted
Shores and faint cliffs and bays and skies.

The ghost of sea that shrank up sighing
At the sand's edge, a short sad breath
Trembling to touch the goal, and dying
With weak heart heaved up once in death—

The rustling sand and shingle shaken
With light sweet touches and small sound—
These could not move us, could not waken
Hearts to look forth, eyes to look round.

Silent we went an hour together,
Under grey skies by waters white.
Our hearts were full of windy weather,
Clouds and blown stars and broken light.

Full of cold clouds and moonbeams drifted
And streaming storms and straying fires,
Our souls in us were stirred and shifted
By doubts and dreams and foiled desires.

Across, aslant, a scudding sea-mew
Swam, dipped, and dropped, and grazed the sea:
And one with me I could not dream you;
And one with you I could not be.

As the white wing the white wave's fringes
Touched and slid over and flashed past—
As a pale cloud a pale flame tinges
From the moon's lowest light and last—

As a star feels the sun and falters,
Touched to death by diviner eyes—
As on the old gods' untended altars
The old fire of withered worship dies—

(Once only, once the shrine relighted
Sees the last fiery shadow shine,
Last shadow of flame and faith benighted,
Sees falter and flutter and fail the shrine)

So once with fiery breath and flying
Your winged heart touched mine and went,
And the swift spirits kissed, and sighing,
Sundered and smiled and were content.

That only touch, that feeling only,
Enough we found, we found too much ;
For the unlit shrine is hardly lonely
As one the old fire forgets to touch.

Slight as the sea's sight of the sea-mew,
Slight as the sun's sight of the star :
Enough to show one must not deem you
For love's sake other than you are.

Who snares and tames with fear and danger
A bright beast of a fiery kin,
Only to mar, only to change her
Sleek supple soul and splendid skin ?

Easy with blows to mar and maim her,
Easy with bonds to bind and bruise ;
What profit, if she yield her tamer
The limbs to mar, the soul to lose ?

Best leave or take the perfect creature,
Take all she is or leave complete ;
Transmute you will not form or feature,
Change feet for wings or wings for feet.

Strange eyes, new limbs, can no man give her;
Sweet is the sweet thing as it is.
No soul she hath, we see, to outlive her;
Hath she for that no lips to kiss?

So may one read his weird, and reason,
And with vain drugs assuage no pain.
For each man in his loving season
Fools and is fooled of these in vain.

Charms that allay not any longing,
Spells that appease not any grief,
Time brings us all by handfuls, wronging
All hurts with nothing of relief.

Ah, too soon shot, the fool's bolt misses!
What help? the world is full of loves;
Night after night of running kisses,
Chirp after chirp of changing doves.

Should Love disown or disesteem you
For loving one man more or less?
You could not tame your light white sea-mew,
Nor I my sleek black pantheress.

For a new soul let whoso please pray,
We are what life made us, and shall be.
For you the jungle and me the sea-spray,
And south for you and north for me.

But this one broken foam-white feather
I throw you off the hither wing,
Splashed stiff with sea-scurf and salt weather,
This song for sleep to learn and sing—

Sing in your ear when, daytime over,
You, couched at long length on hot sand
With some sleek sun-discoloured lover,
Wince from his breath as from a brand :

Till the acrid hour aches out and ceases,
And the sheathed eyeball sleepier swims,
The deep flank smoothes its dimpling creases.
And passion loosens all the limbs :

Till dreams of sharp grey north-sea weather
Fall faint upon your fiery sleep,
As on strange sands a strayed bird's feather
The wind may choose to lose or keep.

But I, who leave my queen of panthers,
As a tired honey-heavy bee
Gilt with sweet dust from gold-grained anthers
Leaves the rose-chalice, what for me ?

From the ardours of the chaliced centre,
From the amorous anthers' golden grime,
That scorch and smutch all wings that enter,
I fly forth hot from honey-time.

But as to a bee's gilt thighs and winglets
The flower-dust with the flower-smell clings ;
As a snake's mobile rampant ringlets
Leave the sand marked with print of rings ;

So to my soul in surer fashion
Your savage stamp and savour hangs ;
The print and perfume of old passion,
The wild-beast mark of panther's fangs.

SESTINA

I saw my soul at rest upon a day
As a bird sleeping in the nest of night,
Among soft leaves that give the starlight way
To touch its wings but not its eyes with light;
So that it knew as one in visions may,
And knew not as men waking, of delight.

This was the measure of my soul's delight;
It had no power of joy to fly by day,
Nor part in the large lordship of the light;
But in a secret moon-beholden way
Had all its will of dreams and pleasant night,
And all the love and life that sleepers may.

But such life's triumph as men waking may
It might not have to feed its faint delight
Between the stars by night and sun by day,
Shut up with green leaves and a little light;
Because its way was as a lost star's way,
A world's not wholly known of day or night.

All loves and dreams and sounds and gleams of night
Made it all music that such minstrels may,
And all they had they gave it of delight;
But in the full face of the fire of day
What place shall be for any starry light,
What part of heaven in all the wide sun's way?

Yet the soul woke not, sleeping by the way,
Watched as a nursling of the large-eyed night,
And sought no strength nor knowledge of the day,
Nor closer touch conclusive of delight,
Nor mightier joy nor truer than dreamers may,
Nor more of song than they, nor more of light.

For who sleeps once and sees the secret light
Whereby sleep shows the soul a fairer way
Between the rise and rest of day and night,
Shall care no more to fare as all men may,
But be his place of pain or of delight,
There shall he dwell, beholding night as day.

Song, have thy day and take thy fill of light
Before the night be fallen across thy way;
Sing while he may, man hath no long delight.

THE YEAR OF THE ROSE

From the depths of the green garden-closes
Where the summer in darkness dozes
  Till autumn pluck from his hand
  An hour-glass that holds not a sand ;
From the maze that a flower-belt encloses
  To the stones and sea-grass on the strand
How red was the reign of the roses
  Over the rose-crowned land !

The year of the rose is brief ;
From the first blade blown to the sheaf,
  From the thin green leaf to the gold,
  It has time to be sweet and grow old,
To triumph and leave not a leaf
  For witness in winter's sight
  How lovers once in the light
Would mix their breath with its breath,
  And its spirit was quenched not of night,
As love is subdued not of death.

In the red-rose land not a mile
Of the meadows from stile to stile,
  Of the valleys from stream to stream,
  But the air was a long sweet dream
And the earth was a sweet wide smile

Red-mouthed of a goddess, returned
From the sea which had borne her and burned,
That with one swift smile of her mouth
Looked full on the north as it yearned,
And the north was more than the south.

For the north, when winter was long,
In his heart had made him a song,
And clothed it with wings of desire,
And shod it with shoon as of fire,
To carry the tale of his wrong
To the south-west wind by the sea,
That none might bear it but he
To the ear of the goddess unknown
Who waits till her time shall be
To take the world for a throne.

In the earth beneath, and above
In the heaven where her name is love,
She warms with light from her eyes
The seasons of life as they rise,
And her eyes are as eyes of a dove,
But the wings that lift her and bear
As an eagle's, and all her hair
As fire by the wind's breath curled,
And her passage is song through the air,
And her presence is spring through the world.

So turned she northward and came,
And the white-thorn land was aflame
With the fires that were shed from her feet,
That the north, by her love made sweet,
Should be called by a rose-red name ;

And a murmur was heard as of doves,
And a music beginning of loves
In the light that the roses made,
Such light as the music loves,
The music of man with maid.

But the days drop one upon one,
And a chill soft wind is begun
In the heart of the rose-red maze
That weeps for the roseleaf days
And the reign of the rose undone
That ruled so long in the light,
And by spirit, and not by sight,
Through the darkness thrilled with its breath,
Still ruled in the viewless night,
As love might rule over death.

The time of lovers is brief;
From the fair first joy to the grief
That tells when love is grown old,
From the warm wild kiss to the cold,
From the red to the white-rose leaf,
They have but a season to seem
As roseleaves lost on a stream
That part not and pass not apart
As a spirit from dream to dream,
As a sorrow from heart to heart.

From the bloom and the gloom that encloses
The death-bed of Love where he dozes
Till a relic be left not of sand
To the hour-glass that breaks in his hand;
From the change in the grey garden-closes
To the last stray grass of the strand,
A rain and ruin of roses
Over the red-rose land

A WASTED VIGIL

I

Couldst thou not watch with me one hour? Behold,
Dawn skims the sea with flying feet of gold,
With sudden feet that graze the gradual sea;
Couldst thou not watch with me?

II

What, not one hour? for star by star the night
Falls, and her thousands world by world take flight;
They die, and day survives, and what of thee?
Couldst thou not watch with me?

III

Lo, far in heaven the web of night undone,
And on the sudden sea the gradual sun;
Wave to wave answers, tree responds to tree;
Couldst thou not watch with me?

IV

Sunbeam by sunbeam creeps from line to line,
Foam by foam quickens on the brightening brine;
Sail by sail passes, flower by flower gets free;
Couldst thou not watch with me?

V

Last year, a brief while since, an age ago,
A whole year past, with bud and bloom and snow,
O moon that wast in heaven, what friends were we!
Couldst thou not watch with me?

VI

Old moons, and last year's flowers, and last year's snows!
Who now saith to thee, moon? or who saith, rose?
O dust and ashes, once found fair to see!
Couldst thou not watch with me?

VII

O dust and ashes, once thought sweet to smell!
With me it is not, is it with thee well?
O sea-drift blown from windward back to lee!
Couldst thou not watch with me?

VIII

The old year's dead hands are full of their dead flowers,
The old days are full of dead old loves of ours,
Born as a rose, and briefer born than she;
Couldst thou not watch with me?

IX

Could two days live again of that dead year,
One would say, seeking us and passing here,
Where is she? and one answering, *Where is he?*
Couldst thou not watch with me?

X

Nay, those two lovers are not anywhere ;
If we were they, none knows us what we were,
Nor aught of all their barren grief and glee.
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

XI

Half false, half fair, all feeble, be my verse
Upon thee not for blessing nor for curse ;
For some must stand, and some must fall or flee ;
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

XII

As a new moon above spent stars thou wast ;
But stars endure after the moon is past.
Couldst thou not watch one hour, though I watch three ?
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

XIII

What of the night ? The night is full, the tide
Storms inland, the most ancient rocks divide ;
Yet some endure, and bow nor head nor knee ;
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

XIV

Since thou art not as these are, go thy ways ;
Thou hast no part in all my nights and days.
Lie still, sleep on, be glad—as such things be ;
Thou couldst not watch with me.

THE COMPLAINT OF LISA

(*Double Sestina*)

DECAMERON, X. 7

THERE is no woman living that draws breath
So sad as I, though all things sadden her.
There is not one upon life's weariest way
Who is weary as I am weary of all but death.
Toward whom I look as looks the sunflower
All day with all his whole soul toward the sun;
While in the sun's sight I make moan all day,
And all night on my sleepless maiden bed
Weep and call out on death, O Love, and thee,
That thou or he would take me to the dead,
And know not what thing evil I have done
That life should lay such heavy hand on me.

Alas, Love, what is this thou wouldst with me?
What honour shalt thou have to quench my breath,
Or what shall my heart broken profit thee?
O Love, O great god Love, what have I done,
That thou shouldst hunger so after my death?
My heart is harmless as my life's first day:
Seek out some false fair woman, and plague her
Till her tears even as my tears fill her bed:
I am the least flower in thy flowery way,

But till my time be come that I be dead
Let me live out my flower-time in the sun
Though my leaves shut before the sunflower.

O Love, Love, Love, the kingly sunflower!
Shall he the sun hath looked on look on me,
That live down here in shade, out of the sun,
Here living in the sorrow and shadow of death?
Shall he that feeds his heart full of the day
Care to give mine eyes light, or my lips breath?
Because she loves him shall my lord love her
Who is as a worm in my lord's kingly way?
I shall not see him or know him alive or dead;
But thou, I know thee, O Love, and pray to thee
That in brief while my brief life-days be done,
And the worm quickly make my marriage-bed.

For underground there is no sleepless bed:
But here since I beheld my sunflower
These eyes have slept not, seeing all night and day
His sunlike eyes, and face fronting the sun.
Wherefore if anywhere be any death,
I would fain find and fold him fast to me,
That I may sleep with the world's eldest dead,
With her that died seven centuries since, and her
That went last night down the night-wandering way.
For this is sleep indeed, when labour is done,
Without love, without dreams, and without breath,
And without thought, O name unnamed! of thee.

Ah, but, forgetting all things, shall I thee?
Wilt thou not be as now about my bed
There underground as here before the sun?
Shall not thy vision vex me alive and dead,

Thy moving vision without form or breath?
I read long since the bitter tale of her
Who read the tale of Launcelot on a day,
And died, and had no quiet after death,
But was moved ever along a weary way,
Lost with her love in the underworld; ah me,
O my king, O my lordly sunflower,
Would God to me too such a thing were done!

But if such sweet and bitter things be done,
Then, flying from life, I shall not fly from thee.
For in that living world without a sun
Thy vision will lay hold upon me dead,
And meet and mock me, and mar my peace in death.
Yet if being wroth God had such pity on her,
Who was a sinner and foolish in her day,
That even in hell they twain should breathe one breath,
Why should he not in some wise pity me?
So if I sleep not in my soft strait bed
I may look up and see my sunflower
As he the sun, in some divine strange way.

O poor my heart, well knowest thou in what way
This sore sweet evil unto us was done.
For on a holy and a heavy day
I was arisen out of my still small bed
To see the knights tilt, and one said to me
"The king," and seeing him, somewhat stopped my breath,
And if the girl spake more, I heard not her,
For only I saw what I shall see when dead,
A kingly flower of knights, a sunflower,

That shone against the sunlight like the sun,
And like a fire, O heart, consuming thee,
The fire of love that lights the pyre of death.

Howbeit I shall not die an evil death
Who have loved in such a sad and sinless way,
That this my love, lord, was no shame to thee.
So when mine eyes are shut against the sun,
O my soul's sun, O the world's sunflower,
Thou nor no man will quite despise me dead.
And dying I pray with all my low last breath
That thy whole life may be as was that day,
That feast-day that made trothplight death and me,
Giving the world light of thy great deeds done ;
And that fair face brightening thy bridal bed,
That God be good as God hath been to her.

That all things goodly and glad remain with her,
All things that make glad life and goodly death ;
That as a bee sucks from a sunflower
Honey, when summer draws delighted breath,
Her soul may drink of thy soul in like way,
And love make life a fruitful marriage-bed
Where day may bring forth fruits of joy to day
And night to night till days and nights be dead.
And as she gives light of her love to thee,
Give thou to her the old glory of days long done ;
And either give some heat of light to me,
To warm me where I sleep without the sun.

O sunflower made drunken with the sun,
O knight whose lady's heart draws thine to her,
Great king, glad lover, I have a word to thee.
There is a weed lives out of the sun's way,

Hid from the heat deep in the meadow's bed,
That swoons and whitens at the wind's least breath,
A flower star-shaped, that all a summer day
Will gaze her soul out on the sunflower
For very love till twilight finds her dead.
But the great sunflower heeds not her poor death,
Knows not when all her loving life is done ;
And so much knows my lord the king of me.

Aye, all day long he has no eye for me ;
With golden eye following the golden sun
From rose-coloured to purple-pillowed bed,
From birthplace to the flame-lit place of death,
From eastern end to western of his way.
So mine eye follows thee, my sunflower,
So the white star-flower turns and yearns to thee,
The sick weak weed, not well alive or dead,
Trod underfoot if any pass by her,
Pale, without colour of summer or summer breath
In the shrunk shuddering petals, that have done
No work but love, and die before the day.

But thou, to-day, to-morrow, and every day,
Be glad and great, O love whose love slays me.
Thy fervent flower made fruitful from the sun
Shall drop its golden seed in the world's way,
That all men thereof nourished shall praise thee
For grain and flower and fruit of works well done ;
Till thy shed seed, O shining sunflower,
Bring forth such growth of the world's garden-bed
As like the sun shall outlive age and death.
And yet I would thine heart had heed of her
Who loves thee alive ; but not till she be dead.
Come, Love, then, quickly, and take her utmost
breath.

Song, speak for me who am dumb as are the dead ;
From my sad bed of tears I send forth thee,
To fly all day from sun's birth to sun's death
Down the sun's way after the flying sun,
For love of her that gave thee wings and breath,
Ere day be done, to seek the sunflower.

FOR THE FEAST OF GIORDANO BRUNO,

PHILOSOPHER AND MARTYR

I

Son of the lightning and the light that glows
Beyond the lightning's or the morning's light,
Soul splendid with all-righteous love of right,
In whose keen fire all hopes and fears and woes
Were clean consumed, and from their ashes rose
Transfigured, and intolerable to sight
Save of purged eyes whose lids had cast off night,
In love's and wisdom's likeness when they close,
Embracing, and between them truth stands fast,
Embraced of either ; thou whose feet were set
On English earth while this was England yet,
Our friend that art, our Sidney's friend that wast,
Heart hardier found and higher than all men's past,
Shall we not praise thee though thine own forget ?

II

Lift up thy light on us and on thine own,
O soul whose spirit on earth was as a rod
To scourge off priests, a sword to pierce their God,
A staff for man's free thought to walk alone,

A lamp to lead him far from shrine and throne
On ways untrodden where his fathers trod
Ere earth's heart withered at a high priest's nod
And all men's mouths that made not prayer made moan.
From bonds and torments and the ravening flame
Surely thy spirit of sense rose up to greet
Lucretius, where such only spirits meet,
And walk with him apart till Shelley came
To make the heaven of heavens more heavenly sweet
And mix with yours a third incorporate name.

AVE ATQUE VALE

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs ;
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.
Les Fleurs du Mal.

I

Shall I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,
Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?
Or quiet sea-flower moulded by the sea,
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,
Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet
To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
Trod by no tropic feet?

II

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,

The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

III

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us :
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime ;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech ;
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep ;
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap.

IV

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping,
That were athirst for sleep and no more life
And no more love, for peace and no more strife !
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping
Spirit and body and all the springs of song,
Is it well now where love can do no wrong,
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
Behind the unopening closure of her lips ?
Is it not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang
As dew from flower-bell drips ?

V

It is enough ; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
No triumph and no labour and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

VI

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savour and shade of old-world pine-forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep ?

VII

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision ?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom ?
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,

What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits grey like dust or bright like blood?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are mute
And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit?

VIII

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—
These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise.

IX

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.

Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

X

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song—
These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical
Of many mourners rolled.

XI

I among these, I also, in such station
As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,
And offering to the dead made, and their gods,
The old mourners had, standing to make libation,
I stand, and to the gods and to the dead
Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed
Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,
And what of honey and spice my seedlands bear,
And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,
And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb
A curl of severed hair.

XII

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the King,
The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,
Thou liest, and on this dust no tears could quicken
There fall no tears like theirs that all men hear
Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear
Down the opening leaves of holy poets' pages.
Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns ;
But bending us-ward with memorial urns
The most high Muses that fulfil all ages
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

XIII

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often
Among us darkling here the lord of light
Makes manifest his music and his might
In hearts that open and in lips that soften
With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.
Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread ;
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

XIV

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sunsetting,
God of all suns and songs, he too bends down
To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown,
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.

Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,
And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,
And over thine irrevocable head
Sheds light from the under skies.

XV

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,
And stains with tears her changing bosom chill:
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,
With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
Long since, and face no more called Erycine ;
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell
Did she, a sad and second prey, compel
Into the footless places once more trod.
And shadows hot from hell.

XVI

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,
No choral salutation lure to light
A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
There is no help for these things ; none to mend
And none to mar ; not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.
Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell
And wreathe an unseen shrine.

XVII

Sleep ; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks ; thou hast no more to live ;
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden
Where all day through thine hands in barren braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants grey,
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
Among the days departed ?

XVIII

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
With sadder than the Niobean womb,
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done ;
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

MEMORIAL VERSES

ON THE DEATH OF THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

Death, what hast thou to do with me? So saith
Love, with eyes set against the face of Death;
What have I done, O thou strong Death, to thee,
That mine own lips should wither from thy breath?

Though thou be blind as fire or as the sea,
Why should thy waves and storms make war on me?
Is it for hate thou hast to find me fair,
Or for desire to kiss, if it might be,

My very mouth of song, and kill me there?
So with keen rains vexing his crownless hair,
With bright feet bruised from no delightful way,
Through darkness and the disenchanted air,

Lost Love went weeping half a winter's day.
And the armèd wind that smote him seemed to say,
How shall the dew live when the dawn is fled,
Or wherefore should the Mayflower outlast May?

Then Death took Love by the right hand and said,
Smiling: Come now and look upon thy dead.
But Love cast down the glories of his eyes,
And bowed down like a flower his flowerless head,

And Death spake, saying : What ails thee in such
wise,
Being god, to shut thy sight up from the skies ?
If thou canst see not, hast thou ears to hear ?
Or is thy soul too as a leaf that dies ?

Even as he spake with fleshless lips of fear,
But soft as sleep sings in a tired man's ear,
Behold, the winter was not, and its might
Fell, and fruits broke forth of the barren year.

And upon earth was largess of great light,
And moving music winged for worldwide flight,
And shapes and sounds of gods beheld and heard,
And day's foot set upon the neck of night.

And with such song the hollow ways were stirred
As of a god's heart hidden in a bird,
Or as the whole soul of the sun in spring
Should find full utterance in one flower-soft word,

And all the season should break forth and sing
From one flower's lips, in one rose triumphing ;
Such breath and light of song as of a flame
Made ears and spirits of them that heard it ring.

And Love beholding knew not for the same
The shape that led him, nor in face nor name,
For he was bright and great of thews and fair,
And in Love's eyes he was not Death, but Fame.

Not that grey ghost whose life is empty and bare
And his limbs moulded out of mortal air,
A cloud of change that shifts into a shower
And dies and leaves no light for time to wear :

But a god clothed with his own joy and power,
A god re-risen out of his mortal hour
Immortal, king and lord of time and space,
With eyes that look on them as from a tower.

And where he stood the pale sepulchral place
Bloomed, as new life might in a bloodless face,
And where men sorrowing came to seek a tomb
With funeral flowers and tears for grief and grace.

They saw with light as of a world in bloom
The portal of the House of Fame illume
The ways of life wherein we toiling tread,
And watched the darkness as a brand consume.

And through the gates where rule the deathless dead
The sound of a new singer's soul was shed
That sang among his kinsfolk, and a beam
Shot from the star on a new ruler's head.

A new star lighting the Lethean stream,
A new song mixed into the song supreme
Made of all souls of singers and their might,
That makes of life and time and death a dream.

Thy star, thy song, O soul that in our sight
Wast as a sun that made for man's delight
Flowers and all fruits in season, being so near
The sun-god's face, our god that gives us light.

To him of all gods that we love or fear
Thou amongst all men by thy name wast dear,
Dear to the god that gives us spirit of song
To bind and burn all hearts of men that hear.

The god that makes men's words too sweet and strong
For life or time or death to do them wrong,
  Who sealed with his thy spirit for a sign
And filled it with his breath thy whole life long.

Who made thy moist lips fiery with new wine
Pressed from the grapes of song, the sovereign vine,
  And with all love of all things loveliest
Gave thy soul power to make them more divine.

That thou might'st breathe upon the breathless rest
Of marble, till the brows and lips and breast
  Felt fall from off them as a cancelled curse
That speechless sleep wherewith they lived opprest.

Who gave thee strength and heat of spirit to pierce
All clouds of form and colour that disperse,
  And leave the spirit of beauty to remould
In types of clean chryselephantine verse.

Who gave thee words more golden than fine gold
To carve in shapes more glorious than of old,
  And build thy songs up in the sight of time
As statues set in godhead manifold:

In sight and scorn of temporal change and clime
That meet the sun re-risen with refluent rhyme
  —As god to god might answer face to face—
From lips whereon the morning strikes sublime.

Dear to the god, our god who gave thee place
Among the chosen of days, the royal race,
  The lords of light, whose eyes of old and ears
Saw even on earth and heard him for a space.

There are the souls of those once mortal years
That wrought with fire of joy and light of tears
  In words divine as deeds that grew thereof
Such music as he swoons with love who hears.

There are the lives that lighten from above
Our under lives, the spheral souls that move
  Through the ancient heaven of song-illumined air
Whence we that hear them singing die with love.

There all the crowned Hellenic heads, and there
The old gods who made men godlike as they were,
  The lyric lips wherefrom all songs take fire,
Live eyes, and light of Apollonian hair.

There, round the sovereign passion of that lyre
Which the stars hear and tremble with desire,
  The ninefold light Pierian is made one
That here we see divided, and aspire,

Seeing, after this or that crown to be won ;
But where they hear the singing of the sun,
  All form, all sound, all colour, and all thought
Are as one body and soul in unison.

There the song sung shines as a picture wrought,
The painted mouths sing that on earth say nought,
  The carven limbs have sense of blood and growth
And large-eyed life that seeks nor lacks not aught.

There all the music of thy living mouth
Lives, and all loves wrought of thine hand in youth
  And bound about the breasts and brows with gold
And coloured pale or dusk from north or south.

Fair living things made to thy will of old,
Born of thy lips, no births of mortal mould,
That in the world of song about thee wait
Where thought and truth are one and manifold.

Within the graven lintels of the gate
That here divides our vision and our fate,
The dreams we walk in and the truths of sleep,
All sense and spirit have life inseparate.

There what one thinks, is his to grasp and keep;
There are no dreams, but very joys to reap,
No foiled desires that die before delight,
No fears to see across our joys and weep.

There hast thou all thy will of thought and sight,
All hope for harvest, and all heaven for flight;
The sunrise of whose golden-mouthed glad head
To paler songless ghosts was heat and light.

Here where the sunset of our year is red
Men think of thee as of the summer dead,
Gone forth before the snows, before thy day,
With unshod feet, with brows unchapleted.

Couldst thou not wait till age had wound, they say,
Round those wreathed brows his soft white blossoms?
Nay,
Why shouldst thou vex thy soul with this harsh air,
Thy bright-winged soul, once free to take its way?

Nor for men's reverence hadst thou need to wear
The holy flower of grey time-hallowed hair;
Nor were it fit that aught of thee grew old,
Fair lover all thy days of all things fair.

And hear we not thy words of molten gold
Singing? or is their light and heat acold
Whereat men warmed their spirits? Nay, for all
These yet are with us, ours to hear and hold.

The lovely laughter, the clear tears, the call
Of love to love on ways where shadows fall,
Through doors of dim division and disguise,
And music made of doubts unmusical;

The love that caught strange light from death's own eyes,[1]
And filled death's lips with fiery words and sighs,
And half asleep let feed from veins of his
Her close red warm snake's mouth, Egyptian-wise:

And that great night of love more strange than this,[2]
When she that made the whole world's bale and bliss
Made king of all the world's desire a slave,
And killed him in mid kingdom with a kiss;

Veiled loves that shifted shapes and shafts, and gave,[3]
Laughing, strange gifts to hands that durst not crave,
Flowers double-blossomed, fruits of scent and hue
Sweet as the bride-bed, stranger than the grave;

All joys and wonders of old lives and new
That ever in love's shine or shadow grew,
And all the grief whereof he dreams and grieves,
And all sweet roots fed on his light and dew;

[1] *La Morte Amoureuse.*
[2] *Une Nuit de Cléopâtre.* [3] *Mademoiselle de Maupin.*

All these through thee our spirit of sense perceives,
As threads in the unseen woof thy music weaves,
  Birds caught and snared that fill our ears with thee,
Bay-blossoms in thy wreath of brow-bound leaves.

Mixed with the masque of death's old comedy
Though thou too pass, have here our flowers, that we
  For all the flowers thou gav'st upon thee shed,
And pass not crownless to Persephone.

Blue lotus-blooms and white and rosy-red
We wind with poppies for thy silent head,
  And on this margin of the sundering sea
Leave thy sweet light to rise upon the dead.

SONNET

(WITH A COPY OF *Mademoiselle de Maupin*)

THIS is the golden book of spirit and sense,
The holy writ of beauty ; he that wrought
Made it with dreams and faultless words and thought
That seeks and finds and loses in the dense
Dim air of life that beauty's excellence
Wherewith love makes one hour of life distraught
And all hours after follow and find not aught.
Here is that height of all love's eminence
Where man may breathe but for a breathing-space
And feel his soul burn as an altar-fire
To the unknown God of unachieved desire,
And from the middle mystery of the place
Watch lights that break, hear sounds as of a quire,
But see not twice unveiled the veiled God's face.

AGE AND SONG

(TO BARRY CORNWALL)

I

In vain men tell us time can alter
Old loves or make old memories falter,
  That with the old year the old year's life closes.
The old dew still falls on the old sweet flowers,
The old sun revives the new-fledged hours,
  The old summer rears the new-born roses.

II

Much more a Muse that bears upon her
Raiment and wreath and flower of honour,
  Gathered long since and long since woven,
Fades not or falls as fall the vernal
Blossoms that bear no fruit eternal,
  By summer or winter charred or cloven.

III

No time casts down, no time upraises,
Such loves, such memories, and such praises,
  As need no grace of sun or shower,
No saving screen from frost or thunder
To tend and house around and under
  The imperishable and fearless flower.

IV

Old thanks, old thoughts, old aspirations,
Outlive men's lives and lives of nations,
  Dead, but for one thing which survives —
The inalienable and unpriced treasure,
The old joy of power, the old pride of pleasure,
  That lives in light above men's lives.

IN MEMORY OF BARRY CORNWALL

(October 4, 1874)

I

In the garden of death, where the singers whose names are deathless
One with another make music unheard of men,
Where the dead sweet roses fade not of lips long breathless,
And the fair eyes shine that shall weep not or change again,
Who comes now crowned with the blossom of snow-white years?
What music is this that the world of the dead men hears?

II

Beloved of men, whose words on our lips were honey,
Whose name in our ears and our fathers' ears was sweet,
Like summer gone forth of the land his songs made sunny,
To the beautiful veiled bright world where the glad ghosts meet,
Child, father, bridegroom and bride, and anguish and rest,
No soul shall pass of a singer than this more blest.

III

Blest for the years' sweet sake that were filled and brightened,
As a forest with birds, with the fruit and the flower of his song ;
For the souls' sake blest that heard, and their cares were lightened,
For the hearts' sake blest that have fostered his name so long ;
By the living and dead lips blest that have loved his name,
And clothed with their praise and crowned with their love for fame.

IV

Ah, fair and fragrant his fame as flowers that close not,
That shrink not by day for heat or for cold by night,
As a thought in the heart shall increase when the heart's self knows not,
Shall endure in our ears as a sound, in our eyes as a light ;
Shall wax with the years that wane and the seasons' chime,
As a white rose thornless that grows in the garden of time.

V

The same year calls, and one goes hence with another,
And men sit sad that were glad for their sweet songs' sake ;

The same year beckons, and elder with younger brother
Takes mutely the cup from his hand that we all shall take.[1]
They pass ere the leaves be past or the snows be come;
And the birds are loud, but the lips that outsang them dumb.

VI

Time takes them home that we loved, fair names and famous,
To the soft long sleep, to the broad sweet bosom of death;
But the flower of their souls he shall take not away to shame us,
Nor the lips lack song for ever that now lack breath.
For with us shall the music and perfume that die not dwell,
Though the dead to our dead bid welcome, and we farewell.

[1] Sydney Dobell died August 22, 1874.

EPICEDE

(James Lorimer Graham died at Florence, April 30, 1876)

Life may give for love to death
  Little ; what are life's gifts worth
  To the dead wrapt round with earth ?
Yet from lips of living breath
  Sighs or words we are fain to give,
  All that yet, while yet we live,
Life may give for love to death.

Dead so long before his day,
  Passed out of the Italian sun
  To the dark where all is done,
Fallen upon the verge of May ;
  Here at life's and April's end
  How should song salute my friend
Dead so long before his day ?

Not a kindlier life or sweeter
  Time, that lights and quenches men,
  Now may quench or light again,
Mingling with the mystic metre
  Woven of all men's lives with his
  Not a clearer note than this,
Not a kindlier life or sweeter.

In this heavenliest part of earth
  He that living loved the light,
  Light and song, may rest aright,
One in death, if strange in birth,
  With the deathless dead that make
  Life the lovelier for their sake
In this heavenliest part of earth.

Light, and song, and sleep at last—
  Struggling hands and suppliant knees
  Get no goodlier gift than these.
Song that holds remembrance fast,
  Light that lightens death, attend
  Round their graves who have to friend
Light, and song, and sleep at last.

TO VICTOR HUGO

He had no children, who for love of men,
Being God, endured of Gods such things as thou,
Father ; nor on his thunder-beaten brow
Fell such a woe as bows thine head again,
Twice bowed before, though godlike, in man's ken,
And seen too high for any stroke to bow
Save this of some strange God's that bends it now
The third time with such weight as bruised it then.
Fain would grief speak, fain utter for love's sake
Some word ; but comfort who might bid thee take ?
What God in your own tongue shall talk with thee,
Showing how all souls that look upon the sun
Shall be for thee one spirit and thy son,
And thy soul's child the soul of man to be ?

January 3, 1874.

INFERIAE

Spring, and the light and sound of things on earth
Requickening, all within our green sea's girth ;
A time of passage or a time of birth
  Fourscore years since as this year, first and last.

The sun is all about the world we see,
The breath and strength of very spring ; and we
Live, love, and feed on our own hearts ; but he
  Whose heart fed mine has passed into the past.

Past, all things born with sense and blood and breath ;
The flesh hears nought that now the spirit saith.
If death be like as birth and birth as death,
  The first was fair—more fair should be the last.

Fourscore years since, and come but one month more
The count were perfect of his mortal score
Whose sail went seaward yesterday from shore
  To cross the last of many an unsailed sea.

Light, love and labour up to life's last height,
These three were stars unsetting in his sight ;
Even as the sun is life and heat and light
  And sets not nor is dark when dark are we.

The life, the spirit, and the work were one
That here—ah, who shall say, that here are done?
Not I, that know not; father, not thy son,
For all the darkness of the night and sea.

March 5, 1877

A BIRTH-SONG

(For Olivia Frances Madox Rossetti, born September 20, 1875)

Out of the dark sweet sleep
Where no dreams laugh or weep
  Borne through bright gates of birth
Into the dim sweet light
Where day still dreams of night
  While heaven takes form on earth,
White rose of spirit and flesh, red lily of love,
What note of song have we
Fit for the birds and thee,
Fair nestling couched beneath the mother-dove?

Nay, in some more divine
Small speechless song of thine
  Some news too good for words,
Heart-hushed and smiling, we
Might hope to have of thee,
  The youngest of God's birds,
If thy sweet sense might mix itself with ours,
If ours might understand
The language of thy land,
Ere thine become the tongue of mortal hours:

Ere thy lips learn too soon
Their soft first human tune,
Sweet, but less sweet than now,
And thy raised eyes to read
Glad and good things indeed,
But none so sweet as thou :
Ere thought lift up their flower-soft lids to see
What life and love on earth
Bring thee for gifts at birth,
But none so good as thine who hast given us thee :

Now, ere thy sense forget
The heaven that fills it yet,
Now, sleeping or awake,
If thou couldst tell, or we
Ask and be heard of thee,
For love's undying sake,
From thy dumb lips divine and bright mute speech
Such news might touch our ear
That then would burn to hear
Too high a message now for man's to reach.

Ere the gold hair of corn
Had withered wast thou born,
To make the good time glad ;
The time that but last year
Fell colder than a tear
On hearts and hopes turned sad,
High hopes and hearts requickening in thy dawn,
Even theirs whose life-springs, child,
Filled thine with life and smiled,
But then wept blood for half their own withdrawn.[1]

[1] Oliver Madox Brown died November 5, 1874, in his twentieth year.

If death and birth be one,
And set with rise of sun,
And truth with dreams divine,
Some word might come with thee
From over the still sea
Deep hid in shade or shine,
Crossed by the crossing sails of death and birth,
Word of some sweet new thing
Fit for such lips to bring,
Some word of love, some afterthought of earth.

If love be strong as death,
By what so natural breath
As thine could this be said?
By what so lovely way
Could love send word to say
He lives and is not dead?
Such word alone were fit for only thee,
If his and thine have met
Where spirits rise and set,
His whom we see not, thine whom scarce we see:

His there new-born, as thou
New-born among us now;
His, here so fruitful-souled,
Now veiled and silent here,
Now dumb as thou last year,
A ghost of one year old:
If lights that change their sphere in changing meet,
Some ray might his not give
To thine who wast to live,
And make thy present with his past life sweet?

Let dreams that laugh or weep,
All glad and sad dreams, sleep;

Truth more than dreams is dear.
Let thoughts that change and fly,
Sweet thoughts and swift, go by;
More than all thought is here.
More than all hope can forge or memory feign
The life that in our eyes,
Made out of love's life, lies,
And flower-like fed with love for sun and rain.

Twice royal in its root
The sweet small olive-shoot
Here set in sacred earth;
Twice dowered with glorious grace
From either heaven-born race
First blended in its birth;
Fair God or Genius of so fair an hour,
For love of either name
Twice crowned, with love and fame,
Guard and be gracious to the fair-named flower.

October 19, 1875.

EX-VOTO

When their last hour shall rise
Pale on these mortal eyes,
Herself like one that dies,
  And kiss me dying
The cold last kiss, and fold
Close round my limbs her cold
Soft shade as raiment rolled
  And leave them lying,

If aught my soul would say
Might move to hear me pray
The birth-god of my day
  That he might hearken,
This grace my heart should crave,
To find no landward grave
That worldly springs make brave,
  World's winters darken,

Nor grow through gradual hours
The cold blind seed of flowers
Made by new beams and showers
  From limbs that moulder,
Nor take my part with earth,
But find for death's new birth
A bed of larger girth,
  More chaste and colder.

Not earth's for spring and fall,
Not earth's at heart, not all
Earth's making, though men call
  Earth only mother,
Not hers at heart she bare
Me, but thy child, O fair
Sea, and thy brother's care,
  The wind thy brother.

Yours was I born, and ye,
The sea-wind and the sea,
Made all my soul in me
  A song for ever,
A harp to string and smite
For love's sake of the bright
Wind and the sea's delight,
  To fail them never:

Not while on this side death
I hear what either saith
And drink of either's breath
  With heart's thanksgiving
That in my veins like wine
Some sharp salt blood of thine,
Some springtide pulse of brine,
  Yet leaps up living.

When thy salt lips wellnigh
Sucked in my mouth's last sigh,
Grudged I so much to die
  This death as others?
Was it no ease to think
The chalice from whose brink
Fate gave me death to drink
  Was thine—my mother's?

Thee too, the all-fostering earth,
Fair as thy fairest birth,
More than thy worthiest worth,
We call, we know thee,
More sweet and just and dread
Than live men highest of head
Or even thy holiest dead
Laid low below thee.

The sunbeam on the sheaf,
The dewfall on the leaf,
All joy, all grace, all grief,
Are thine for giving;
Of thee our loves are born,
Our lives and loves, that mourn
And triumph; tares with corn,
Dead seed with living:

All good and ill things done
In eyeshot of the sun
At last in thee made one
Rest well contented;
All words of all man's breath
And works he doth or saith,
All wholly done to death,
None long lamented.

A slave to sons of thee,
Thou, seeming, yet art free;
But who shall make the sea
Serve even in seeming?
What plough shall bid it bear
Seed to the sun and the air,
Fruit for thy strong sons' fare,
Fresh wine's foam streaming?

What oldworld son of thine,
Made drunk with death as wine,
Hath drunk the bright sea's brine
With lips of laughter?
Thy blood they drink; but he
Who hath drunken of the sea
Once deeplier than of thee
Shall drink not after.

Of thee thy sons of men
Drink deep, and thirst again;
For wine in feasts, and then
In fields for slaughter;
But thirst shall touch not him
Who hath felt with sense grown dim
Rise, covering lip and limb,
The wan sea's water.

All fire of thirst that aches
The salt sea cools and slakes
More than all springs or lakes,
Freshets or shallows;
Wells where no beam can burn
Through frondage of the fern
That hides from hart and hern
The haunt it hallows.

Peace with all graves on earth
For death or sleep or birth
Be alway, one in worth
One with another;
But when my time shall be,
O mother, O my sea,
Alive or dead, take me,
Me too, my mother.

A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND

I HID my heart in a nest of roses,
Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;
In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,
Under the roses I hid my heart.
Why would it sleep not? why should it start,
When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred?
What made sleep flutter his wings and part?
Only the song of a secret bird.

Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,
And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart;
Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea dozes,
And the wind is unquieter yet than thou art.
Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart?
Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred?
What bids the lids of thy sleep dispart?
Only the song of a secret bird.

The green land's name that a charm encloses,
It never was writ in the traveller's chart,
And sweet on its trees as the fruit that grows is,
It never was sold in the merchant's mart.
The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,

And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard;
No hound's note wakens the wildwood hart,
Only the song of a secret bird.

ENVOI

In the world of dreams I have chosen my part,
To sleep for a season and hear no word
Of true love's truth or of light love's art,
Only the song of a secret bird.

CYRIL TOURNEUR

A SEA that heaves with horror of the night,
As maddened by the moon that hangs aghast
With strain and torment of the ravening blast,
Haggard as hell, a bleak blind bloody light ;
No shore but one red reef of rock in sight,
Whereon the waifs of many a wreck were cast
And shattered in the fierce nights overpast
Wherein more souls toward hell than heaven took flight ;
And 'twixt the shark-toothed rocks and swallowing shoals
A cry as out of hell from all these souls
Sent through the sheer gorge of the slaughtering sea,
Whose thousand throats, full-fed with life by death,
Fill the black air with foam and furious breath ;
And over all these one star—Chastity.

A BALLAD OF FRANÇOIS VILLON

PRINCE OF ALL BALLAD-MAKERS

Bird of the bitter bright grey golden morn
  Scarce risen upon the dusk of dolorous years,
First of us all and sweetest singer born
  Whose far shrill note the world of new men hears
  Cleave the cold shuddering shade as twilight clears;
When song new-born put off the old world's attire
And felt its tune on her changed lips expire,
  Writ foremost on the roll of them that came
Fresh girt for service of the latter lyre,
  Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Alas the joy, the sorrow, and the scorn,
  That clothed thy life with hopes and sins and fears,
And gave thee stones for bread and tares for corn
  And plume-plucked gaol-birds for thy starveling peers
  Till death clipt close their flight with shameful shears;
Till shifts came short and loves were hard to hire,
When lilt of song nor twitch of twangling wire
  Could buy thee bread or kisses; when light fame
Spurned like a ball and haled through brake and briar,
  Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!
  Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears!
Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,
  That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers
  Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears!
What far delight has cooled the fierce desire
That like some ravenous bird was strong to tire
  On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame,
But left more sweet than roses to respire,
  Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name?

ENVOI

Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,
A harlot was thy nurse, a God thy sire;
  Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled thy shame.
But from thy feet now death has washed the mire,
Love reads out first at head of all our quire,
  Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name.

PASTICHE

Now the days are all gone over
Of our singing, love by lover,
Days of summer-coloured seas
Blown adrift through beam and breeze

Now the nights are all past over
Of our dreaming, dreams that hover
In a mist of fair false things,
Nights afloat on wide wan wings.

Now the loves with faith for mother,
Now the fears with hope for brother,
Scarce are with us as strange words,
Notes from songs of last year's birds.

Now all good that comes or goes is
As the smell of last year's roses,
As the radiance in our eyes
Shot from summer's ere he dies.

Now the morning faintlier risen
Seems no God come forth of prison,
But a bird of plume-plucked wing,
Pale with thoughts of evening.

Now hath hope, outraced in running,
Given the torch up of his cunning
And the palm he thought to wear
Even to his own strong child—despair.

BEFORE SUNSET

In the lower lands of day
  On the hither side of night,
There is nothing that will stay,
  There are all things soft to sight ;
  Lighted shade and shadowy light
In the wayside and the way,
  Hours the sun has spared to smite,
Flowers the rain has left to play.

Shall these hours run down and say
  No good thing of thee and me?
Time that made us and will slay
  Laughs at love in me and thee ;
  But if here the flowers may see
One whole hour of amorous breath,
  Time shall die, and love shall be
Lord as time was over death.

SONG

Love laid his sleepless head
On a thorny rosy bed ;
And his eyes with tears were red,
And pale his lips as the dead.

And fear and sorrow and scorn
Kept watch by his head forlorn,
Till the night was overworn
And the world was merry with morn.

And Joy came up with the day
And kissed Love's lips as he lay,
And the watchers ghostly and grey
Sped from his pillow away.

And his eyes as the dawn grew bright,
And his lips waxed ruddy as light :
Sorrow may reign for a night,
But day shall bring back delight.

A VISION OF SPRING IN WINTER

I

O TENDER time that love thinks long to see,
Sweet foot of spring that with her footfall sows
Late snowlike flowery leavings of the snows,
Be not too long irresolute to be ;
O mother-month, where have they hidden thee ?
Out of the pale time of the flowerless rose
I reach my heart out toward the springtime lands,
I stretch my spirit forth to the fair hours,
The purplest of the prime ;
I lean my soul down over them, with hands
Made wide to take the ghostly growths of flowers ;
I send my love back to the lovely time.

II

Where has the greenwood hid thy gracious head ?
Veiled with what visions while the grey world grieves,
Or muffled with what shadows of green leaves,
What warm intangible green shadows spread
To sweeten the sweet twilight for thy bed ?
What sleep enchants thee ? what delight deceives ?

Where the deep dreamlike dew before the dawn
  Feels not the fingers of the sunlight yet
    Its silver web unweave,
Thy footless ghost on some unfooted lawn
  Whose air the unrisen sunbeams fear to fret
    Lives a ghost's life of daylong dawn and eve.

III

Sunrise it sees not, neither set of star,
  Large nightfall, nor imperial plenilune,
  Nor strong sweet shape of the full-breasted noon;
But where the silver-sandalled shadows are,
Too soft for arrows of the sun to mar,
  Moves with the mild gait of an ungrown moon:
Hard overhead the half-lit crescent swims,
  The tender-coloured night draws hardly breath,
    The light is listening;
They watch the dawn of slender-shapen limbs,
  Virginal, born again of doubtful death,
    Chill foster-father of the weanling spring.

IV

As sweet desire of day before the day,
  As dreams of love before the true love born,
  From the outer edge of winter overworn
The ghost arisen of May before the May
Takes through dim air her unawakened way,
  The gracious ghost of morning risen ere morn.
With little unblown breasts and child-eyed looks
  Following, the very maid, the girl-child spring,
    Lifts windward her bright brows,
Dips her light feet in warm and moving brooks,
  And kindles with her own mouth's colouring
    The fearful firstlings of the plumeless boughs.

V

I seek thee sleeping, and awhile I see,
Fair face that art not, how thy maiden breath
Shall put at last the deadly days to death
And fill the fields and fire the woods with thee
And seaward hollows where my feet would be
When heaven shall hear the word that April saith
To change the cold heart of the weary time,
To stir and soften all the time to tears,
Tears joyfuller than mirth;
As even to May's clear height the young days climb
With feet not swifter than those fair first years
Whose flowers revive not with thy flowers on earth.

VI

I would not bid thee, though I might, give back
One good thing youth has given and borne away;
I crave not any comfort of the day
That is not, nor on time's retrodden track
Would turn to meet the white-robed hours or black
That long since left me on their mortal way;
Nor light nor love that has been, nor the breath
That comes with morning from the sun to be
And sets light hope on fire;
No fruit, no flower thought once too fair for death,
No flower nor hour once fallen from life's green tree,
No leaf once plucked or once fulfilled desire.

VII

The morning song beneath the stars that fled
With twilight through the moonless mountain air,
While youth with burning lips and wreathless hair
Sang toward the sun that was to crown his head,
Rising ; the hopes that triumphed and fell dead,
The sweet swift eyes and songs of hours that were ;
These may'st thou not give back for ever ; these,
As at the sea's heart all her wrecks lie waste,
Lie deeper than the sea ;
But flowers thou may'st, and winds, and hours of ease,
And all its April to the world thou may'st
Give back, and half my April back to me.

CHORIAMBICS

Love, what ailed thee to leave life that was made
lovely, we thought, with love?
What sweet visions of sleep lured thee away, down
from the light above?

What strange faces of dreams, voices that called,
hands that were raised to wave,
Lured or led thee, alas, out of the sun, down to the
sunless grave?

Ah, thy luminous eyes! once was their light fed with
the fire of day;
Now their shadowy lids cover them close, hush them
and hide away.

Ah, thy snow-coloured hands! once were they chains,
mighty to bind me fast;
Now no blood in them burns, mindless of love, sense-
less of passion past.

Ah, thy beautiful hair! so was it once braided for
me, for me;
Now for death is it crowned, only for death, lover
and lord of thee.

Sweet, the kisses of death set on thy lips, colder are
they than mine ;
Colder surely than past kisses that love poured for
thy lips as wine.

Lov'st thou death? is his face fairer than love's,
brighter to look upon?
Seest thou light in his eyes, light by which love's
pales and is overshone?

Lo the roses of death, grey as the dust, chiller of leaf
than snow !
Why let fall from thy hand love's that were thine,
roses that loved thee so?

Large red lilies of love, sceptral and tall, lovely for
eyes to see ;
Thornless blossom of love, full of the sun, fruits that
were reared for thee.

Now death's poppies alone circle thy hair, girdle thy
breasts as white ;
Bloodless blossoms of death, leaves that have sprung
never against the light.

Nay then, sleep if thou wilt ; love is content ; what
should he do to weep?
Sweet was love to thee once ; now in thine eyes
sweeter than love is sleep.

AT PARTING

For a day and a night Love sang to us, played with us,
Folded us round from the dark and the light;
And our hearts were fulfilled of the music he made with us,
Made with our hearts and our lips while he stayed with us,
Stayed in mid passage his pinions from flight
For a day and a night.

From his foes that kept watch with his wings had he hidden us,
Covered us close from the eyes that would smite,
From the feet that had tracked and the tongues that had chidden us
Sheltering in shade of the myrtles forbidden us
Spirit and flesh growing one with delight
For a day and a night.

But his wings will not rest and his feet will not stay for us:
Morning is here in the joy of its might;
With his breath has he sweetened a night and a day for us;
Now let him pass, and the myrtles make way for us;
Love can but last in us here at his height
For a day and a night.

A SONG IN SEASON

I

Thou whose beauty
Knows no duty
Due to love that moves thee never;
Thou whose mercies
Are men's curses,
And thy smile a scourge for ever;

II

Thou that givest
Death and livest
On the death of thy sweet giving;
Thou that sparest
Not nor carest
Though thy scorn leave no love living;

III

Thou whose rootless
Flower is fruitless
As the pride its heart encloses,
But thine eyes are
As May skies are,
And thy words like spoken roses;

IV

Thou whose grace is
In men's faces
Fierce and wayward as thy will is ;
Thou whose peerless
Eyes are tearless,
And thy thoughts as cold sweet lilies ;

V

Thou that takest
Hearts and makest
Wrecks of loves to strew behind thee,
Whom the swallow
Sure should follow,
Finding summer where we find thee ;

VI

Thou that wakest
Hearts and breakest,
And thy broken hearts forgive thee,
That wilt make no
Pause and take no
Gift that love for love might give thee ;

VII

Thou that bindest
Eyes and blindest,
Serving worst who served thee longest ;
Thou that speakest,
And the weakest
Heart is his that was the strongest ;

VIII

Take in season
Thought with reason ;
Think what gifts are ours for giving ;
Hear what beauty
Owes of duty
To the love that keeps it living.

IX

Dust that covers
Long dead lovers
Song blows off with breath that brightens
At its flashes
Their white ashes
Burst in bloom that lives and lightens.

X

Had they bent not
Head or lent not
Ear to love and amorous duties,
Song had never
Saved for ever,
Love, the least of all their beauties.

XI

All the golden
Names of olden
Women yet by men's love cherished,
All our dearest
Thoughts hold nearest,
Had they loved not, all had perished.

XII

If no fruit is
Of thy beauties,
Tell me yet, since none may win them,
What and wherefore
Love should care for
Of all good things hidden in them?

XIII

Pain for profit
Comes but of it,
If the lips that lure their lover's
Hold no treasure
Past the measure
Of the lightest hour that hovers.

XIV

If they give not
Or forgive not
Gifts or thefts for grace or guerdon,
Love that misses
Fruit of kisses
Long will bear no thankless burden.

XV

If they care not
Though love were not,
If no breath of his burn through them,
Joy must borrow
Song from sorrow,
Fear teach hope the way to woo them.

XVI

Grief has measures
Soft as pleasure's,
Fear has moods that hope lies deep in,
Songs to sing him,
Dreams to bring him,
And a red-rose bed to sleep in.

XVII

Hope with fearless
Looks and tearless
Lies and laughs too near the thunder;
Fear hath sweeter
Speech and meeter
For heart's love to hide him under.

XVIII

Joy by daytime
Fills his playtime
Full of songs loud mirth takes pride in;
Night and morrow
Weave round sorrow
Thoughts as soft as sleep to hide in.

XIX

Graceless faces,
Loveless graces,
Are but motes in light that quicken,
Sands that run down
Ere the sundown,
Roseleaves dead ere autumn sicken.

XX

Fair and fruitless
Charms are bootless
Spells to ward off age's peril;
Lips that give not
Love shall live not,
Eyes that meet not eyes are sterile.

XXI

But the beauty
Bound in duty
Fast to love that falls off never
Love shall cherish
Lest it perish,
And its root bears fruit for ever

TWO LEADERS

βᾶτε δόμον, μεγάλοι φιλοτίμοι
Νυκτὸς παῖδες ἄπαιδες, ὑπ' εὐφρονι πομπᾷ.

I

O GREAT and wise, clear-souled and high of heart,
One the last flower of Catholic love, that grows
Amid bare thorns their only thornless rose,
From the fierce juggling of the priests' loud mart
Yet alien, yet unspotted and apart
From the blind hard foul rout whose shameless shows
Mock the sweet heaven whose secret no man knows
With prayers and curses and the soothsayer's art;
One like a storm-god of the northern foam
Strong, wrought of rock that breasts and breaks the sea
And thunders back its thunder, rhyme for rhyme
Answering, as though to outroar the tides of time
And bid the world's wave back—what song should be
Theirs that with praise would bring and sing you home?

II

With all our hearts we praise you whom ye hate,
High souls that hate us ; for our hopes are higher,
And higher than yours the goal of our desire,
Though high your ends be as your hearts are great.
Your world of Gods and kings, of shrine and state,
Was of the night when hope and fear stood nigher,
Wherein men walked by light of stars and fire
Till man by day stood equal with his fate.
Honour not hate we give you, love not fear,
Last prophets of past kind, who fill the dome
Of great dead Gods with wrath and wail, nor hear
Time's word and man's : " Go honoured hence, go home,
Night's childless children ; here your hour is done ;
Pass with the stars, and leave us with the sun."

VICTOR HUGO IN 1877

"Dazzle mine eyes, or do I see three suns?"

Above the spring-tide sundawn of the year,
A sunlike star, not born of day or night,
Filled the fair heaven of spring with heavenlier light,
Made of all ages orbed in one sole sphere
Whose light was as a Titan's smile or tear;
Then rose a ray more flowerlike, starry white,
Like a child's eye grown lovelier with delight,
Sweet as a child's heart-lightening laugh to hear;
And last a fire from heaven, a fiery rain
As of God's wrath on the unclean cities, fell
And lit the shuddering shades of half-seen hell
That shrank before it and were cloven in twain;
A beacon fired by lightning, whence all time
Sees red the bare black ruins of a crime.

CHILD'S SONG

What is gold worth, say,
Worth for work or play,
Worth to keep or pay,
Hide or throw away,
Hope about or fear?
What is love worth, pray?
Worth a tear?

Golden on the mould
Lie the dead leaves rolled
Of the wet woods old,
Yellow leaves and cold,
Woods without a dove;
Gold is worth but gold;
Love's worth love.

TRIADS

I

I

The word of the sun to the sky,
  The word of the wind to the sea,
    The word of the moon to the night,
      What may it be?

II

The sense to the flower of the fly,
  The sense of the bird to the tree,
    The sense to the cloud of the light,
      Who can tell me?

III

The song of the fields to the kye,
  The song of the lime to the bee,
    The song of the depth to the height,
      Who knows all three?

II

I

The message of April to May
  That May sends on into June
    And June gives out to July
      For birthday boon;

II

The delight of the dawn in the day,
The delight of the day in the noon,
The delight of a song in a sigh
That breaks the tune;

III

The secret of passing away,
The cost of the change of the moon,
None knows it with ear or with eye,
But all will soon.

III

I

The live wave's love for the shore,
The shore's for the wave as it dies,
The love of the thunder-fire
That sears the skies,

II

We shall know not though life wax hoar,
Till all life, spent into sighs,
Burn out as consumed with desire
Of death's strange eyes:

III

Till the secret be secret no more
In the light of one hour as it flies,
Be the hour as of suns that expire
Or suns that rise.

FOUR SONGS OF FOUR SEASONS

I

WINTER IN NORTHUMBERLAND

1

Outside the garden
The wet skies harden ;
The gates are barred on
The summer side :
" Shut out the flower-time,
Sunbeam and shower-time ;
Make way for our time,"
Wild winds have cried.
Green once and cheery,
The woods, worn weary,
Sigh as the dreary
Weak sun goes home :
A great wind grapples
The wave, and dapples
The dead green floor of the sea with foam.

II

Through fell and moorland,
And salt-sea foreland,
Our noisy norland
Resounds and rings ;

Waste waves thereunder
Are blown in sunder,
And winds make thunder
With cloudwide wings ;
Sea-drift makes dimmer
The beacon's glimmer ;
Nor sail nor swimmer
Can try the tides ;
And snowdrifts thicken
Where, when leaves quicken,
Under the heather the sundew hides.

III

Green land and red land,
Moorside and headland,
Are white as dead land,
Are all as one ;
Nor honied heather,
Nor bells to gather,
Fair with fair weather
And faithful sun :
Fierce frost has eaten
All flowers that sweeten
The fells rain-beaten ;
And winds their foes
Have made the snow's bed
Down in the rose-bed ;
Deep in the snow's bed bury the rose.

IV

Bury her deeper
Than any sleeper ;
Sweet dreams will keep her
All day, all night ;

Though sleep benumb her
And time o'ercome her,
She dreams of summer,
  And takes delight,
Dreaming and sleeping
In love's good keeping,
While rain is weeping
  And no leaves cling;
Winds will come bringing her
Comfort, and singing her
Stories and songs and good news of the spring.

V

Draw the white curtain
Close, and be certain
She takes no hurt in
  Her soft low bed;
She feels no colder,
And grows not older,
Though snows enfold her
  From foot to head;
She turns not chilly
Like weed and lily
In marsh or hilly
  High watershed,
Or green soft island
In lakes of highland;
She sleeps awhile, and she is not dead.

VI

For all the hours,
Come sun, come showers,
Are friends of flowers,
  And fairies all;

When frost entrapped her,
They came and lapped her
In leaves, and wrapped her
With shroud and pall;
In red leaves wound her,
With dead leaves bound her
Dead brows, and round her
A death-knell rang;
Rang the death-bell for her,
Sang, "is it well for her,
Well, is it well with you, rose?" they sang.

VII

O what and where is
The rose now, fairies,
So shrill the air is,
So wild the sky?
Poor last of roses,
Her worst of woes is
The noise she knows is
The winter's cry;
His hunting hollo
Has scared the swallow;
Fain would she follow
And fain would fly:
But wind unsettles
Her poor last petals;
Had she but wings, and she would not die.

VIII

Come, as you love her,
Come close and cover
Her white face over,
And forth again

Ere sunset glances
On foam that dances,
Through lowering lances
  Of bright white rain ;
And make your playtime
Of winter's daytime,
As if the Maytime
  Were here to sing ;
As if the snowballs
Were soft like blowballs,
Blown in a mist from the stalk in the spring.

IX

Each reed that grows in
Our stream is frozen,
The fields it flows in
  Are hard and black ;
The water-fairy
Waits wise and wary
Till time shall vary
  And thaws come back.
"O sister, water,"
The wind besought her,
"O twin-born daughter
  Of spring with me,
Stay with me, play with me,
Take the warm way with me,
Straight for the summer and oversea."

X

But winds will vary,
And wise and wary
The patient fairy
  Of water waits ;

All shrunk and wizen,
In iron prison,
Till spring re-risen
  Unbar the gates;
Till, as with clamour
Of axe and hammer,
Chained streams that stammer
  And struggle in straits
Burst bonds that shiver,
And thaws deliver
The roaring river in stormy spates.

XI

In fierce March weather
White waves break tether,
And whirled together
  At either hand,
Like weeds uplifted,
The tree-trunks rifted
In spars are drifted,
  Like foam or sand,
Past swamp and sallow
And reed-beds callow,
Through pool and shallow,
  To wind and lee,
Till, no more tongue-tied,
Full flood and young tide
Roar down the rapids and storm the sea.

XII

As men's cheeks faded
On shores invaded,
When shorewards waded
  The lords of fight;

When churl and craven
Saw hard on haven
The wide-winged raven
  At mainmast height ;
When monks affrighted
To windward sighted
The birds full-flighted
  Of swift sea-kings ;
So earth turns paler
When Storm the sailor
Steers in with a roar in the race of his wings.

XIII

O strong sea-sailor,
Whose cheek turns paler
For wind or hail or
  For fear of thee ?
O far sea-farer,
O thunder-bearer,
Thy songs are rarer
  Than soft songs be.
O fleet-foot stranger,
O north-sea ranger
Through days of danger
  And ways of fear,
Blow thy horn here for us,
Blow the sky clear for us,
Send us the song of the sea to hear.

XIV

Roll the strong stream of it
Up, till the scream of it
Wake from a dream of it
  Children that sleep,

Seamen that fare for them
Forth, with a prayer for them ;
Shall not God care for them,
Angels not keep ?
Spare not the surges
Thy stormy scourges ;
Spare us the dirges
Of wives that weep.
Turn back the waves for us :
Dig no fresh graves for us,
Wind, in the manifold gulfs of the deep.

XV

O stout north-easter,
Sea-king, land-waster,
For all thine haste, or
Thy stormy skill,
Yet hadst thou never,
For all endeavour,
Strength to dissever
Or strength to spill,
Save of his giving
Who gave our living,
Whose hands are weaving
What ours fulfil ;
Whose feet tread under
The storms and thunder ,
Who made our wonder to work his will.

XVI

His years and hours,
His world's blind powers,
His stars and flowers,
His nights and days,

Sea-tide and river,
And waves that shiver,
Praise God, the giver
  Of tongues to praise.
Winds in their blowing,
And fruits in growing;
Time in its going,
  While time shall be;
In death and living,
With one thanksgiving,
Praise him whose hand is the strength of the sea.

II

SPRING IN TUSCANY

Rose-red lilies that bloom on the banner ;
Rose-cheeked gardens that revel in spring ;
Rose-mouthed acacias that laugh as they climb,
Like plumes for a queen's hand fashioned to fan her
With wind more soft than a wild dove's wing,
What do they sing in the spring of their time?

If this be the rose that the world hears singing,
Soft in the soft night, loud in the day,
Songs for the fire-flies to dance as they hear ;
If that be the song of the nightingale, springing
Forth in the form of a rose in May,
What do they say of the way of the year?

What of the way of the world gone Maying,
What of the work of the buds in the bowers,
What of the will of the wind on the wall,
Fluttering the wall-flowers, sighing and playing,
Shrinking again as a bird that cowers,
Thinking of hours when the flowers have to fall?

Out of the throats of the loud birds showering,
Out of the folds where the flag-lilies leap,
Out of the mouths of the roses stirred,

Out of the herbs on the walls reflowering,
Out of the heights where the sheer snows sleep,
Out of the deep and the steep, one word.

One from the lips of the lily-flames leaping,
The glad red lilies that burn in our sight,
The great live lilies for standard and crown ;
One from the steeps where the pines stand sleeping,
One from the deep land, one from the height,
One from the light and the might of the town.

The lowlands laugh with delight of the highlands,
Whence May winds feed them with balm and breath
From hills that beheld in the years behind
A shape as of one from the blest souls' islands,
Made fair by a soul too fair for death,
With eyes on the light that should smite them blind.

Vallombrosa remotely remembers,
Perchance, what still to us seems so near
That time not darkens it, change not mars,
The foot that she knew when her leaves were September's,
The face lift up to the star-blind seer,
That saw from his prison arisen his stars.

And Pisa broods on her dead, not mourning,
For love of her loveliness given them in fee ;
And Prato gleams with the glad monk's gift
Whose hand was there as the hand of morning ;
And Siena, set in the sand's red sea,
Lifts loftier her head than the red sand's drift.

And far to the fair south-westward lightens,
Girdled and sandalled and plumed with flowers,
At sunset over the love-lit lands,
The hill-side's crown where the wild hill brightens,
Saint Fina's town of the Beautiful Towers,
Hailing the sun with a hundred hands.

Land of us all that have loved thee dearliest,
Mother of men that were lords of man,
Whose name in the world's heart works as a spell,
My last song's light, and the star of mine earliest,
As we turn from thee, sweet, who wast ours for a span,
Fare well we may not who say farewell.

III

SUMMER IN AUVERGNE

The sundawn fills the land
Full as a feaster's hand
Fills full with bloom of bland
Bright wine his cup ;
Flows full to flood that fills
From the arch of air it thrills
Those rust-red iron hills
With morning up.

Dawn, as a panther springs,
With fierce and fire-fledged wings
Leaps on the land that rings
From her bright feet
Through all its lava-black
Cones that cast answer back
And cliffs of footless track
Where thunders meet.

The light speaks wide and loud
From deeps blown clean of cloud
As though day's heart were proud
And heaven's were glad ;
The towers brown-striped and grey
Take fire from heaven of day
As though the prayers they pray
Their answers had.

Higher in these high first hours
Wax all the keen church towers,
And higher all hearts of ours
Than the old hills' crown,
Higher than the pillared height
Of that strange cliff-side bright
With basalt towers whose might
Strong time bows down.

And the old fierce ruin there
Of the old wild princes' lair
Whose blood in mine hath share
Gapes gaunt and great
Toward heaven that long ago
Watched all the wan land's woe
Whereon the wind would blow
Of their bleak hate.

Dead are those deeds ; but yet
Their memory seems to fret
Lands that might else forget
That old world's brand ;
Dead all their sins and days ;
Yet in this red clime's rays
Some fiery memory stays
That sears their land.

IV

AUTUMN IN CORNWALL

THE year lies fallen and faded
On cliffs by clouds invaded,
With tongues of storms upbraided,
With wrath of waves bedinned;
And inland, wild with warning,
As in deaf ears or scorning,
The clarion even and morning
Rings of the south-west wind.

The wild bents wane and wither
In blasts whose breath bows hither
Their grey-grown heads and thither,
Unblest of rain or sun;
The pale fierce heavens are crowded
With shapes like dreams beclouded,
As though the old year enshrouded
Lay, long ere life were done.

Full-charged with oldworld wonders,
From dusk Tintagel thunders
A note that smites and sunders
The hard frore fields of air;
A trumpet stormier-sounded
Than once from lists rebounded
When strong men sense-confounded
Fell thick in tourney there.

From scarce a duskier dwelling
Such notes of wail rose welling
Through the outer darkness, telling
In the awful singer's ears
What souls the darkness covers,
What love-lost souls of lovers,
Whose cry still hangs and hovers
In each man's born that hears.

For there by Hector's brother
And yet some thousand other
He that had grief to mother
Passed pale from Dante's sight;
With one fast linked as fearless,
Perchance, there only tearless;
Iseult and Tristram, peerless
And perfect queen and knight.

A shrill-winged sound comes flying
North, as of wild souls crying
The cry of things undying,
That know what life must be;
Or as the old year's heart, stricken
Too sore for hope to quicken
By thoughts like thorns that thicken,
Broke, breaking with the sea.

THE WHITE CZAR

[In an English magazine of 1877 there appeared a version of some insolent lines addressed by "A Russian Poet to the Empress of India." To these the first of the two following sonnets was designed to serve by way of counterblast. The writer will scarcely be suspected of royalism or imperialism; but it seemed to him that an insult levelled by Muscovite lips at the ruler of England might perhaps be less unfitly than unofficially resented by an Englishman who was also a republican.]

I

Gehazi by the hue that chills thy cheek
And Pilate by the hue that sears thine hand
Whence all earth's waters cannot wash the brand
That signs thy soul a manslayer's though thou speak
All Christ, with lips most murderous and most meek—
Thou set thy foot where England's used to stand!
Thou reach thy rod forth over Indian land!
Slave of the slaves that call thee lord, and weak
As their foul tongues who praise thee! son of them
Whose presence put the snows and stars to shame
In centuries dead and damned that reek below
Curse-consecrated, crowned with crime and flame,
To them that bare thee like them shalt thou go
Forth of man's life—a leper white as snow.

II

Call for clear water, wash thine hands, be clean,
Cry, *What is truth?* O Pilate ; thou shalt know
Haply too soon, and gnash thy teeth for woe
Ere the outer darkness take thee round unseen
That hides the red ghosts of thy race obscene
Bound nine times round with hell's most dolorous flow,
And in its pools thy crownless head lie low
By his of Spain who dared an English queen
With half a world to hearten him for fight,
Till the wind gave his warriors and their might
To shipwreck and the corpse-encumbered sea.
But thou, take heed, ere yet thy lips wax white,
Lest as it was with Philip so it be,
O white of name and red of hand, with thee.

RIZPAH

How many sons, how many generations,
For how long years hast thou bewept, and known
Nor end of torment nor surcease of moan,
Rachel or Rizpah, wofullest of nations,
Crowned with the crowning sign of desolations,
And couldst not even scare off with hand or groan
Those carrion birds devouring bone by bone
The children of thy thousand tribulations?
Thou wast our warrior once; thy sons long dead
Against a foe less foul than this made head,
Poland, in years that sound and shine afar;
Ere the east beheld in thy bright sword-blade's stead
The rotten corpse-light of the Russian star
That lights towards hell his bondslaves and their
Czar.

TO LOUIS KOSSUTH

1877

Light of our fathers' eyes, and in our own
Star of the unsetting sunset! for thy name,
That on the front of noon was as a flame
In the great year nigh thirty years agone
When all the heavens of Europe shook and shone
With stormy wind and lightning, keeps its fame
And bears its witness all day through the same;
Not for past days and great deeds past alone,
Kossuth, we praise thee as our Landor praised,
But that now too we know thy voice upraised,
Thy voice, the trumpet of the truth of God,
Thine hand, the thunder-bearer's, raised to smite
As with heaven's lightning for a sword and rod
Men's heads abased before the Muscovite.

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE FRENCH OF VILLON

THE COMPLAINT OF THE FAIR ARMOURESS

I

Meseemeth I heard cry and groan
That sweet who was the armourer's maid;
For her young years she made sore moan,
And right upon this wise she said;
"Ah fierce old age with foul bald head,
To spoil fair things thou art over fain;
Who holdeth me? who? would God I were dead!
Would God I were well dead and slain!

II

"Lo, thou hast broken the sweet yoke
That my high beauty held above
All priests and clerks and merchant-folk;
There was not one but for my love
Would give me gold and gold enough,
Though sorrow his very heart had riven,
To win from me such wage thereof
As now no thief would take if given.

III

"I was right chary of the same,
God wot it was my great folly,
For love of one sly knave of them,
Good store of that same sweet had he;
For all my subtle wiles, perdie,
God wot I loved him well enow;
Right evilly he handled me,
But he loved well my gold, I trow.

IV

"Though I gat bruises green and black,
I loved him never the less a jot;
Though he bound burdens on my back,
If he said 'Kiss me and heed it not'
Right little pain I felt, God wot,
When that foul thief's mouth, found so sweet,
Kissed me—Much good thereof I got!
I keep the sin and the shame of it.

V

"And he died thirty year agone.
I am old now, no sweet thing to see;
By God, though, when I think thereon,
And of that good glad time, woe's me,
And stare upon my changed body
Stark naked, that has been so sweet,
Lean, wizen, like a small dry tree,
I am nigh mad with the pain of it.

VI

" Where is my faultless forehead's white,
The lifted eyebrows, soft gold hair,
Eyes wide apart and keen of sight,
With subtle skill in the amorous air ;
The straight nose, great nor small, but fair,
The small carved ears of shapeliest growth,
Chin dimpling, colour good to wear,
And sweet red splendid kissing mouth ?

VII

" The shapely slender shoulders small,
Long arms, hands wrought in glorious wise,
Round little breasts, the hips withal
High, full of flesh, not scant of size,
Fit for all amorous masteries ;
*** ***** *****, *** *** ****** **** ***
******* ***** ** **** ***** ******
** * ***** ****** ** **** ***** ?

VIII

" A writhled forehead, hair gone grey,
Fallen eyebrows, eyes gone blind and red,
Their laughs and looks all fled away,
Yea, all that smote men's hearts are fled ;
The bowed nose, fallen from goodlihead ;
Foul flapping ears like water-flags ;
Peaked chin, and cheeks all waste and dead,
And lips that are two skinny rags :

IX

"Thus endeth all the beauty of us.
The arms made short, the hands made lean,
The shoulders bowed and ruinous,
The breasts, alack! all fallen in;
The flanks too, like the breasts, grown thin;
** *** *** ***** *****, *** ** ** !
For the lank thighs, no thighs but skin,
They are specked with spots like sausage-meat.

X

"So we make moan for the old sweet days,
Poor old light women, two or three
Squatting above the straw-fire's blaze,
The bosom crushed against the knee,
Like faggots on a heap we be,
Round fires soon lit, soon quenched and done:
And we were once so sweet, even we!
Thus fareth many and many an one."

A DOUBLE BALLAD OF GOOD COUNSEL

Now take your fill of love and glee,
And after balls and banquets hie ;
In the end ye'll get no good for fee,
But just heads broken by and by ;
Light loves make beasts of men that sigh ;
They changed the faith of Solomon,
And left not Samson lights to spy ;
Good luck has he that deals with none !

Sweet Orpheus, lord of minstrelsy,
For this with flute and pipe came nigh
The danger of the dog's heads three
That ravening at hell's door doth lie ;
Fain was Narcissus, fair and shy,
For love's love lightly lost and won,
In a deep well to drown and die ;
Good luck has he that deals with none !

Sardana, flower of chivalry,
Who conquered Crete with horn and cry,
For this was fain a maid to be
And learn with girls the thread to ply ;
King David, wise in prophecy,
Forgot the fear of God for one
Seen washing either shapely thigh ;
Good luck has he that deals with none !

For this did Amnon, craftily
Feigning to eat of cakes of rye,
Deflower his sister fair to see,
Which was foul incest; and hereby
Was Herod moved, it is no lie,
To lop the head of Baptist John
For dance and jig and psaltery;
Good luck has he that deals with none!

Next of myself I tell, poor me,
How thrashed like clothes at wash was I
Stark naked, I must needs agree;
Who made me eat so sour a pie
But Katherine of Vaucelles? thereby,
Noé took third part of that fun;
Such wedding-gloves are ill to buy;
Good luck has he that deals with none!

But for that young man fair and free
To pass those young maids lightly by,
Nay, would you burn him quick, not he;
Like broom-horsed witches though he fry,
They are sweet as civet in his eye;
But trust them, and you're fooled anon;
For white or brown, and low or high,
Good luck has he that deals with none!

FRAGMENT ON DEATH

And Paris be it or Helen dying,
Who dies soever, dies with pain.
He that lacks breath and wind for sighing,
His gall bursts on his heart; and then
He sweats, God knows what sweat!—again,
No man may ease him of his grief;
Child, brother, sister, none were fain
To bail him thence for his relief.

Death makes him shudder, swoon, wax pale,
Nose bend, veins stretch, and breath surrender,
Neck swell, flesh soften, joints that fail
Crack their strained nerves and arteries slender.
O woman's body found so tender,
Smooth, sweet, so precious in men's eyes,
Must thou too bear such count to render?
Yes; or pass quick into the skies.

[In the original here follows Villon's masterpiece, the matchless *Ballad of the Ladies of Old Time*, so incomparably rendered in the marvellous version of D. G. Rossetti; followed in its turn by the succeeding poem, as inferior to its companion as is my attempt at translation of it to his triumph in that higher and harder field.—A. C. S.]

BALLAD OF THE LORDS OF OLD TIME

(AFTER THE FORMER ARGUMENT)

WHAT more? Where is the third Calixt,
Last of that name now dead and gone,
Who held four years the Papalist?
Alphonso king of Aragon,
The gracious lord, duke of Bourbon,
And Arthur, duke of old Britaine?
And Charles the Seventh, that worthy one?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

The Scot too, king of mount and mist,
With half his face vermilion,
Men tell us, like an amethyst
From brow to chin that blazed and shone;
The Cypriote king of old renown,
Alas! and that good king of Spain,
Whose name I cannot think upon?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

No more to say of them I list;
'Tis all but vain, all dead and done:
For death may no man born resist,
Nor make appeal when death comes on.
I make yet one more question;
Where's Lancelot, king of far Bohain?
Where's he whose grandson called him son?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

Where is Guesclin, the good Breton?
The lord of the eastern mountain-chain,
And the good late duke of Alençon?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

BALLAD OF THE WOMEN OF PARIS

Albeit the Venice girls get praise
For their sweet speech and tender air,
And though the old women have wise ways
Of chaffering for amorous ware,
Yet at my peril dare I swear,
Search Rome, where God's grace mainly tarries,
Florence and Savoy, everywhere,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

The Naples women, as folk prattle,
Are sweetly spoken and subtle enough :
German girls are good at tattle,
And Prussians make their boast thereof ;
Take Egypt for the next remove,
Or that waste land the Tartar harries,
Spain or Greece, for the matter of love,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

Breton and Swiss know nought of the matter,
Gascony girls or girls of Toulouse ;
Two fishwives here with a half-hour's chatter
Would shut them up by threes and twos ;
Calais, Lorraine, and all their crews,
(Names enow the mad song marries)
England and Picardy, search them and choose,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

Prince, give praise to our French ladies
For the sweet sound their speaking carries;
'Twixt Rome and Cadiz many a maid is,
But no good girl's lip out of Paris.

BALLAD WRITTEN FOR A BRIDEGROOM

WHICH VILLON GAVE TO A GENTLEMAN NEWLY MARRIED TO SEND TO HIS WIFE WHOM HE HAD WON WITH THE SWORD

At daybreak, when the falcon claps his wings,
No whit for grief, but noble heart and high,
With loud glad noise he stirs himself and springs,
And takes his meat and toward his lure draws nigh;
Such good I wish you! Yea, and heartily
I am fired with hope of true love's meed to get;
Know that Love writes it in his book; for why,
This is the end for which we twain are met.

Mine own heart's lady with no gainsayings
You shall be always wholly till I die;
And in my right against all bitter things
Sweet laurel with fresh rose its force shall try;
Seeing reason wills not that I cast love by
(Nor here with reason shall I chide or fret)
Nor cease to serve, but serve more constantly;
This is the end for which we twain are met.

And, which is more, when grief about me clings
Through Fortune's fit or fume of jealousy,
Your sweet kind eye beats down her threatenings
As wind doth smoke; such power sits in your eye.

Thus in your field my seed of harvestry
Thrives, for the fruit is like me that I set ;
God bids me tend it with good husbandry ;
This is the end for which we twain are met.

Princess, give ear to this my summary ;
That heart of mine your heart's love should forget
Shall never be : like trust in you put I :
This is the end for which we twain are met.

BALLAD AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF FRANCE

May he fall in with beasts that scatter fire,
Like Jason, when he sought the fleece of gold,
Or change from man to beast three years entire,
As King Nebuchadnezzar did of old;
Or else have times as shameful and as bad
As Trojan folk for ravished Helen had;
Or gulfed with Proserpine and Tantalus
Let hell's deep fen devour him dolorous,
With worse to bear than Job's worst sufferance,
Bound in his prison-maze with Dædalus,
Who could wish evil to the state of France!

May he four months, like bitterns in the mire,
Howl with head downmost in the lake-springs cold,
Or to bear harness like strong bulls for hire
To the Great Turk for money down be sold;
Or thirty years like Magdalen live sad,
With neither wool nor web of linen clad;
Drown like Narciss', or swing down pendulous
Like Absalom with locks luxurious,
Or liker Judas fallen to reprobance;
Or find such death as Simon sorcerous,
Who could wish evil to the state of France!

May the old times come of fierce Octavian's ire,
And in his belly molten coin be told;
May he like Victor in the mill expire,
Crushed between moving millstones on him rolled,

Or in deep sea drenched breathless, more adrad
Than in the whale's bulk Jonas, when God bade :
From Phœbus' light, from Juno's treasure-house
Driven, and from joys of Venus amorous,
And cursed of God most high to the utterance,
As was the Syrian king Antiochus,
Who could wish evil to the state of France !

Prince, may the bright-winged brood of Æolus
To sea-king Glaucus' wild wood cavernous
Bear him bereft of peace and hope's least glance,
For worthless is he to get good of us,
Who could wish evil to the state of France.

THE DISPUTE OF THE HEART AND BODY OF FRANÇOIS VILLON

Who is this I hear?—Lo, this is I, thine heart,
That holds on merely now by a slender string.
Strength fails me, shape and sense are rent apart;
The blood in me is turned to a bitter thing,
Seeing thee skulk here like a dog shivering.—
Yea, and for what?—For that thy sense found sweet.—
What irks it thee?—I feel the sting of it.—
Leave me at peace.—Why?—Nay now, leave me at peace;
I will repent when I grow ripe in wit.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

What art thou, trow?—A man worth praise, perfay.—
This is thy thirtieth year of wayfaring.—
'Tis a mule's age.—Art thou a boy still?—Nay.—
Is it hot lust that spurs thee with its sting,
Grasping thy throat? Know'st thou not anything?—
Yea, black and white, when milk is specked with flies,
I can make out.—No more?—Nay, in no wise.
Shall I begin again the count of these?—
Thou art undone.—I will make shift to rise.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

I have the sorrow of it, and thou the smart.
Wert thou a poor mad fool or weak of wit,
Then might'st thou plead this pretext with thine heart;
But if thou know not good from evil a whit,
Either thy head is hard as stone to hit,
Or shame, not honour, gives thee most content.
What canst thou answer to this argument?—
When I am dead I shall be well at ease.—
God! what good hope!—Thou art over eloquent.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

Whence is this ill?—From sorrow and not from sin.
When Saturn packed my wallet up for me
I well believe he put these ills therein.—
Fool, wilt thou make thy servant lord of thee?
Hear now the wise king's counsel; thus saith he:
All power upon the stars a wise man hath;
There is no planet that shall do him scathe.—
Nay, as they made me I grow and I decrease.—
What say'st thou?—Truly this is all my faith.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

Wouldst thou live still?—God help me that I may!—
Then thou must—What? turn penitent and pray?—
Read always—What?—Grave words and good to say;
Leave off the ways of fools, lest they displease.—
Good; I will do it.—Wilt thou remember?—Yea.—
Abide not till there come an evil day.
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.

EPISTLE IN FORM OF A BALLAD TO HIS FRIENDS

Have pity, pity, friends, have pity on me,
Thus much at least, may it please you, of your grace!
I lie not under hazel or hawthorn-tree
Down in this dungeon ditch, mine exile's place
By leave of God and fortune's foul disgrace.
Girls, lovers, glad young folk and newly wed,
Jumpers and jugglers, tumbling heel o'er head,
Swift as a dart, and sharp as needle-ware,
Throats clear as bells that ring the kine to shed,
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

Singers that sing at pleasure, lawlessly,
Light, laughing, gay of word and deed, that race
And run like folk light-witted as ye be
And have in hand nor current coin nor base,
Ye wait too long, for now he's dying apace.
Rhymers of lays and roundels sung and read,
Ye'll brew him broth too late when he lies dead.
Nor wind nor lightning, sunbeam nor fresh air,
May pierce the thick wall's bound where lies his bed;
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

O noble folk from tithes and taxes free,
Come and behold him in this piteous case,
Ye that nor king nor emperor holds in fee,
But only God in heaven ; behold his face
Who needs must fast, Sundays and holidays,
Which makes his teeth like rakes ; and when he hath fed
With never a cake for banquet but dry bread,
Must drench his bowels with much cold watery fare,
With board nor stool, but low on earth instead ;
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

Princes afore-named, old and young foresaid,
Get me the king's seal and my pardon sped,
And hoist me in some basket up with care :
So swine will help each other ill bested,
For where one squeaks they run in heaps ahead.
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

THE EPITAPH IN FORM OF A BALLAD

WHICH VILLON MADE FOR HIMSELF AND HIS COMRADES, EXPECTING TO BE HANGED ALONG WITH THEM

MEN, brother men, that after us yet live,
Let not your hearts too hard against us be;
For if some pity of us poor men ye give,
The sooner God shall take of you pity.
Here are we five or six strung up, you see,
And here the flesh that all too well we fed
Bit by bit eaten and rotten, rent and shred,
And we the bones grow dust and ash withal;
Let no man laugh at us discomforted,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

If we call on you, brothers, to forgive,
Ye should not hold our prayer in scorn, though we
Were slain by law; ye know that all alive
Have not wit alway to walk righteously;
Make therefore intercession heartily
With him that of a virgin's womb was bred,
That his grace be not as a dry well-head
For us, nor let hell's thunder on us fall;
We are dead, let no man harry or vex us dead,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

The rain has washed and laundered us all five,
And the sun dried and blackened; yea, perdie,
Ravens and pies with beaks that rend and rive
Have dug our eyes out, and plucked off for fee
Our beards and eyebrows; never are we free,

Not once, to rest; but here and there still sped,
Drive at its wild will by the wind's change led,
More pecked of birds than fruits on garden-wall;
Men, for God's love, let no gibe here be said,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

Prince Jesus, that of all art lord and head,
Keep us, that hell be not our bitter bed;
We have nought to do in such a master's hall.
Be not ye therefore of our fellowhead,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

FROM VICTOR HUGO

Take heed of this small child of earth ;
He is great : he hath in him God most high
Children before their fleshly birth
Are lights alive in the blue sky.

In our light bitter world of wrong
They come ; God gives us them awhile.
His speech is in their stammering tongue,
And his forgiveness in their smile.

Their sweet light rests upon our eyes.
Alas ! their right to joy is plain.
If they are hungry, Paradise
Weeps, and, if cold, Heaven thrills with pain.

The want that saps their sinless flower
Speaks judgment on sin's ministers.
Man holds an angel in his power.
Ah ! deep in Heaven what thunder stirs,

When God seeks out these tender things
Whom in the shadow where we sleep
He sends us clothed about with wings,
And finds them ragged babes that weep !

NOCTURNE

La nuit écoute et se penche sur l'onde
Pour y cueillir rien qu'un souffle d'amour ;
Pas de lueur, pas de musique au monde,
Pas de sommeil pour moi ni de séjour.
O mère, ô Nuit, de ta source profonde
Verse-nous, verse enfin l'oubli du jour.

Verse l'oubli de l'angoisse et du jour ;
Chante ; ton chant assoupit l'âme et l'onde :
Fais de ton sein pour mon âme un séjour,
Elle est bien lasse, ô mère, de ce monde,
Où le baiser ne veut pas dire amour,
Où l'âme aimée est moins que toi profonde.

Car toute chose aimée est moins profonde,
O Nuit, que toi, fille et mère du jour ;
Toi dont l'attente est le répit du monde,
Toi dont le souffle est plein de mots d'amour,
Toi dont l'haleine enfle et réprime l'onde,
Toi dont l'ombre a tout le ciel pour séjour.

La misère humble et lasse, sans séjour,
S'abrite et dort sous ton aile profonde ;
Tu fais à tous l'aumône de l'amour :
Toutes les soifs viennent boire à ton onde.
Tout ce qui pleure et se dérobe au jour,
Toutes les faims et tous les maux du monde.

Moi seul je veille et ne vois dans ce monde
Que ma douleur qui n'ait point de séjour
Où s'abriter sur ta rive profonde
Et s'endormir sous tes yeux loin du jour ;
Je vais toujours cherchant au bord de l'onde
Le sang du beau pied blessé de l'amour.

La mer est sombre où tu naquis, amour,
Pleine des pleurs et des sanglots du monde ;
On ne voit plus le gouffre où naît le jour
Luire et frémir sous ta lueur profonde ;
Mais dans les cœurs d'homme où tu fais séjour
La douleur monte et baisse comme une onde.

ENVOI

Fille de l'onde et mère de l'amour,
Du haut séjour plein de ta paix profonde
Sur ce bas monde épands un peu de jour.

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

Pour mettre une couronne au front d'une chanson,
Il semblait qu'en passant son pied semât des roses,
Et que sa main cueillît comme des fleurs écloses
Les étoiles au fond du ciel en floraison.

Sa parole de marbre et d'or avait le son
Des clairons de l'été chassant les jours moroses ;
Comme en Thrace Apollon banni des grands cieux roses,
Il regardait du cœur l'Olympe, sa maison.

Le soleil fut pour lui le soleil du vieux monde,
Et son œil recherchait dans les flots embrasés
Le sillon immortel d'où s'élança sur l'onde
Vénus, que la mer molle enivrait de baisers :
Enfin, dieu ressaisi de sa splendeur première,
Il trône, et son sépulcre est bâti de lumière.

ODE

(LE TOMBEAU DE THÉOPHILE GAUTIER)

Quelle fleur, ô Mort, quel joyau, quel chant,
Quel vent, quel rayon de soleil couchant,
Sur ton front penché, sur ta main avide,
Sur l'âpre pâleur de ta lèvre aride,
Vibre encore et luit ?
Ton sein est sans lait, ton oreille est vide,
Ton œil plein de nuit.

Ta bouche est sans souffle et ton front sans ride ;
Mais l'éclair voilé d'une flamme humide,
Flamme éclose au cœur d'un ciel pluvieux,
Rallume ta lèvre et remplit tes yeux
De lueurs d'opale ;
Ta bouche est vermeille et ton front joyeux,
O toi qui fus pâle.

Comme aux jours divins la mère des dieux,
Reine au sein fécond, au corps radieux,
Tu surgis au bord de la tombe amère ;
Tu nous apparais, ô Mort, vierge et mère,
Effroi des humains,
Le divin laurier sur la tête altière
Et la lyre aux mains.

Nous reconnaissons, courbés vers la terre,
Que c'est la splendeur de ta face austère
Qui dore la nuit de nos longs malheurs ;
Que la vie ailée aux mille couleurs,
Dont tu n'es que l'âme,
Refait par tes mains les prés et les fleurs,
La rose et la femme.

Lune constante ! astre ami des douleurs
Qui luis à travers la brume des pleurs !
Quelle flamme au fond de ta clarté molle
Éclate et rougit, nouvelle auréole,
Ton doux front voilé ?
Quelle étoile, ouvrant ses ailes, s'envole
Du ciel étoilé ?

Pleurant ce rayon de jour qu'on lui vole,
L'homme exècre en vain la Mort triste et folle ;
Mais l'astre qui fut à nos yeux si beau,
Là-haut, loin d'ici, dans un ciel nouveau
Plein d'autres étoiles,
Se lève, et pour lui la nuit du tombeau
Entr'ouvre ses voiles.

L'âme est dans le corps comme un jeune oiseau
Dont l'aile s'agite au bord du berceau ;
La mort, déliant cette aile inquiète,
Quand nous écoutons la bouche muette
Qui nous dit adieu,
Fait de l'homme infime et sombre un poëte,
Du poëte un dieu.

IN OBITUM THEOPHILI POETÆ

O LUX Pieridum et laurigeri deliciæ dei,
Vox leni Zephyro lenior, ut veris amans novi
Tollit floridulis implicitum primitiis caput,
Ten' ergo abripuit non rediturum, ut redeunt novo
Flores vere novi, te quoque mors irrevocabilem?
Cur vatem neque te Musa parens, te neque Gratiæ,
Nec servare sibi te potuit fidum animi Venus?
Quæ nunc ipsa magis vel puero te Cinyreïo,
Te desiderium et flebilibus lumen amoribus,
Amissum queritur, sanguineis fusa comam genis.
Tantis tu lacrymis digne, comes dulcis Apollini,
Carum nomen eris dîs superis atque sodalibus
Nobis, quîs eadem quæ tibi vivo patuit via
Non æquis patet, at te sequimur passibus haud tuis,
At mæsto cinerem carmine non illacrymabilem
Tristesque exuvias floribus ac fletibus integris
Unà contegimus, nec citharâ nec sine tibiâ,
Votoque unanimæ vocis Ave dicimus et Vale.

AD CATULLUM

Catulle frater, ut velim comes tibi
Remota per vireta, per cavum nemus
Sacrumque Ditis haud inhospiti specus,
Pedem referre, trans aquam Stygis ducem
Secutus unum et unicum, Catulle, te,
Ut ora vatis optimi reviserem,
Tui meique vatis ora, quem scio
Venustiorem adîsse vel tuo lacum,
Benigniora semper arva vel tuis,
Ubi serenus accipit suos deus,
Tegitque myrtus implicata laureâ,
Manuque mulcet halituque consecrat
Fovetque blanda mors amabili sinu,
Et ore fama fervido colit viros
Alitque qualis unus ille par tibi
Britannus unicusque in orbe præstitit
Amicus ille noster, ille ceteris
Poeta major, omnibusque floribus
Priore Landor inclytum rosâ caput
Revinxit extulitque, quam tuâ manu
Recepit ac refovit integram suâ.

DEDICATION

1878

Some nine years gone, as we dwelt together
In the sweet hushed heat of the south French weather
Ere autumn fell on the vine-tressed hills
Or the season had shed one rose-red feather,

Friend, whose fame is a flame that fills
All eyes it lightens and hearts it thrills
With joy to be born of the blood which bred
From a land that the grey sea girds and chills

The heart and spirit and hand and head
Whose might is as light on a dark day shed,
On a day now dark as a land's decline
Where all the peers of your praise are dead,

In a land and season of corn and vine
I pledged you a health from a beaker of mine
But halfway filled to the lip's edge yet
With hope for honey and song for wine.

Nine years have risen and eight years set
Since there by the wellspring our hands on it met:
And the pledge of my songs that were then to be,
I could wonder not, friend, though a friend should forget.

For life's helm rocks to the windward and lee,
And time is as wind, and as waves are we;
And song is as foam that the sea-winds fret,
Though the thought at its heart should be deep as the sea.

POEMS AND BALLADS

THIRD SERIES

TO

WILLIAM BELL SCOTT

POET AND PAINTER

I DEDICATE THESE POEMS

IN MEMORY OF MANY YEARS

MARCH: AN ODE

1887

I

Ere frost-flower and snow-blossom faded and fell,
and the splendour of winter had passed out of sight,
The ways of the woodlands were fairer and stranger
than dreams that fulfil us in sleep with delight;
The breath of the mouths of the winds had hardened
on tree-tops and branches that glittered and swayed
Such wonders and glories of blossomlike snow or of
frost that outlightens all flowers till it fade
That the sea was not lovelier than here was the land,
nor the night than the day, nor the day than the night,
Nor the winter sublimer with storm than the spring:
such mirth had the madness and might in thee made,
March, master of winds, bright minstrel and marshal
of storms that enkindle the season they smite.

II

And now that the rage of thy rapture is satiate with
revel and ravin and spoil of the snow,
And the branches it brightened are broken, and
shattered the tree-tops that only thy wrath could
lay low,
How should not thy lovers rejoice in thee, leader and
lord of the year that exults to be born
So strong in thy strength and so glad of thy glad-
ness whose laughter puts winter and sorrow to
scorn?
Thou hast shaken the snows from thy wings, and the
frost on thy forehead is molten: thy lips are
aglow
As a lover's that kindle with kissing, and earth, with
her raiment and tresses yet wasted and torn,
Takes breath as she smiles in the grasp of thy
passion to feel through her spirit the sense of
thee flow.

III

Fain, fain would we see but again for an hour what
the wind and the sun have dispelled and con-
sumed,
Those full deep swan-soft feathers of snow with
whose luminous burden the branches implumed
Hung heavily, curved as a half-bent bow, and fledged
not as birds are, but petalled as flowers,
Each tree-top and branchlet a pinnacle jewelled and
carved, or a fountain that shines as it showers,
But fixed as a fountain is fixed not, and wrought not
to last till by time or by tempest entombed,

As a pinnacle carven and gilded of men: for the date
of its doom is no more than an hour's,
One hour of the sun's when the warm wind wakes
him to wither the snow-flowers that froze as they
bloomed.

IV

As the sunshine quenches the snowshine; as April
subdues thee, and yields up his kingdom to
May;
So time overcomes the regret that is born of delight
as it passes in passion away,
And leaves but a dream for desire to rejoice in or
mourn for with tears or thanksgivings; but
thou,
Bright god that art gone from us, maddest and
gladdest of months, to what goal hast thou gone
from us now?
For somewhere surely the storm of thy laughter that
lightens, the beat of thy wings that play,
Must flame as a fire through the world, and the
heavens that we know not rejoice in thee: surely
thy brow
Hath lost not its radiance of empire, thy spirit the
joy that impelled it on quest as for prey.

V

Are thy feet on the ways of the limitless waters, thy
wings on the winds of the waste north sea?
Are the fires of the false north dawn over heavens
where summer is stormful and strong like thee

Now bright in the sight of thine eyes? are the bastions of icebergs assailed by the blast of thy breath?
Is it March with the wild north world when April is waning? the word that the changed year saith,
Is it echoed to northward with rapture of passion reiterate from spirits triumphant as we
Whose hearts were uplift at the blast of thy clarions as men's rearisen from a sleep that was death
And kindled to life that was one with the world's and with thine? hast thou set not the whole world free?

VI

For the breath of thy lips is freedom, and freedom's the sense of thy spirit, the sound of thy song,
Glad god of the north-east wind, whose heart is as high as the hands of thy kingdom are strong,
Thy kingdom whose empire is terror and joy, twin-featured and fruitful of births divine,
Days lit with the flame of the lamps of the flowers, and nights that are drunken with dew for wine,
And sleep not for joy of the stars that deepen and quicken, a denser and fierier throng,
And the world that thy breath bade whiten and tremble rejoices at heart as they strengthen and shine,
And earth gives thanks for the glory bequeathed her, and knows of thy reign that it wrought not wrong.

VII

Thy spirit is quenched not, albeit we behold not thy
face in the crown of the steep sky's arch,
And the bold first buds of the whin wax golden, and
witness arise of the thorn and the larch :
Wild April, enkindled to laughter and storm by the
kiss of the wildest of winds that blow,
Calls loud on his brother for witness ; his hands
that were laden with blossom are sprinkled with
snow,
And his lips breathe winter, and laugh, and relent ;
and the live woods feel not the frost's flame
parch ;
For the flame of the spring that consumes not but
quickens is felt at the heart of the forest aglow,
And the sparks that enkindled and fed it were strewn
from the hands of the gods of the winds of
March.

THE COMMONWEAL

1887

I

Eight hundred years and twenty-one
  Have shone and sunken since the land
  Whose name is freedom bore such brand
As marks a captive, and the sun
  Beheld her fettered hand.

II

But ere dark time had shed as rain
  Or sown on sterile earth as seed
  That bears no fruit save tare and weed
An age and half an age again,
  She rose on Runnymede.

III

Out of the shadow, starlike still,
  She rose up radiant in her right,
  And spake, and put to fear and flight
The lawless rule of awless will
  That pleads no right save might.

IV

Nor since hath England ever borne
The burden laid on subject lands,
The rule that curbs and binds all hands
Save one, and marks for servile scorn
The heads it bows and brands.

V

A commonweal arrayed and crowned
With gold and purple, girt with steel
At need, that foes must fear or feel,
We find her, as our fathers found,
Earth's lordliest commonweal.

VI

And now that fifty years are flown
Since in a maiden's hand the sign
Of empire that no seas confine
First as a star to seaward shone,
We see their record shine.

VII

A troubled record, foul and fair,
A simple record and serene,
Inscribes for praise a blameless queen,
For praise and blame an age of care
And change and ends unseen.

VIII

Hope, wide of eye and wild of wing,
Rose with the sundawn of a reign
Whose grace should make the rough ways plain,
And fill the worn old world with spring,
And heal its heart of pain.

IX

Peace was to be on earth ; men's hope
Was holier than their fathers had,
Their wisdom not more wise than glad :
They saw the gates of promise ope,
And heard what love's lips bade.

X

Love armed with knowledge, winged and wise,
Should hush the wind of war, and see,
They said, the sun of days to be
Bring round beneath serener skies
A stormless jubilee.

XI

Time, in the darkness unbeholden
That hides him from the sight of fear
And lets but dreaming hope draw near,
Smiled and was sad to hear such golden
Strains hail the all-golden year,

XII

Strange clouds have risen between, and wild
Red stars of storm that lit the abyss
Wherein fierce fraud and violence kiss
And mock such promise as beguiled
The fiftieth year from this.

XIII

War upon war, change after change,
Hath shaken thrones and towers to dust,
And hopes austere and faiths august
Have watched in patience stern and strange
Men's works unjust and just.

XIV

As from some Alpine watch-tower's portal
Night, living yet, looks forth for dawn,
So from time's mistier mountain lawn
The spirit of man, in trust immortal
Yearns toward a hope withdrawn.

XV

The morning comes not, yet the night
Wanes, and men's eyes win strength to see
Where twilight is, where light shall be
When conquered wrong and conquering right
Acclaim a world set free.

XVI

Calm as our mother-land, the mother
Of faith and freedom, pure and wise,
Keeps watch beneath unchangeful skies,
When hath she watched the woes of other
Strange lands with alien eyes?

XVII

Calm as she stands alone, what nation
Hath lacked an alms from English hands?
What exiles from what stricken lands
Have lacked the shelter of the station
Where higher than all she stands?

XVIII

Though time discrown and change dismantle
The pride of thrones and towers that frown,
How should they bring her glories down—
The sea cast round her like a mantle,
The sea-cloud like a crown?

XIX

The sea, divine as heaven and deathless,
Is hers, and none but only she
Hath learnt the sea's word, none but we
Her children hear in heart the breathless
Bright watchword of the sea.

XX

Heard not of others, or misheard
Of many a land for many a year,
The watchword Freedom fails not here
Of hearts that witness if the word
Find faith in England's ear.

XXI

She, first to love the light, and daughter
Incarnate of the northern dawn,
She, round whose feet the wild waves fawn
When all their wrath of warring water
Sounds like a babe's breath drawn,

XXII

How should not she best know, love best,
And best of all souls understand
The very soul of freedom, scanned
Far off, sought out in darkling quest
By men at heart unmanned?

XXIII

They climb and fall, ensnared, enshrouded,
By mists of words and toils they set
To take themselves, till fierce regret
Grows mad with shame, and all their clouded
Red skies hang sunless yet.

XXIV

But us the sun, not wholly risen
Nor equal now for all, illumes
With more of light than cloud that looms;
Of light that leads forth souls from prison
And breaks the seals of tombs.

XXV

Did not her breasts who reared us rear
Him who took heaven in hand, and weighed
Bright world with world in balance laid?
What Newton's might could make not clear
Hath Darwin's might not made?

XXVI

The forces of the dark dissolve,
The doorways of the dark are broken:
The word that casts out night is spoken,
And whence the springs of things evolve
Light born of night bears token.

XXVII

She, loving light for light's sake only,
And truth for only truth's, and song
For song's sake and the sea's, how long
Hath she not borne the world her lonely
Witness of right and wrong?

XXVIII

From light to light her eyes imperial
  Turn, and require the further light,
  More perfect than the sun's in sight,
Till star and sun seem all funereal
  Lamps of the vaulted night.

XXIX

She gazes till the strenuous soul
  Within the rapture of her eyes
  Creates or bids awake, arise,
The light she looks for, pure and whole
  And worshipped of the wise.

XXX

Such sons are hers, such radiant hands
  Have borne abroad her lamp of old,
  Such mouths of honey-dropping gold
Have sent across all seas and lands
  Her fame as music rolled.

XXXI

As music made of rolling thunder
  That hurls through heaven its heart sublime,
  Its heart of joy, in charging chime,
So ring the songs that round and under
  Her temple surge and climb.

XXXII

A temple not by men's hands builded,
But moulded of the spirit, and wrought
Of passion and imperious thought;
With light beyond all sunlight gilded,
Whereby the sun seems nought.

XXXIII

Thy shrine, our mother, seen for fairer
Than even thy natural face, made fair
With kisses of thine April air
Even now, when spring thy banner-bearer
Took up thy sign to bear;

XXXIV

Thine annual sign from heaven's own arch
Given of the sun's hand into thine,
To rear and cheer each wildwood shrine
But now laid waste by wild-winged March,
March, mad with wind like wine.

XXXV

From all thy brightening downs whereon
The windy seaward whin-flower shows
Blossom whose pride strikes pale the rose
Forth is the golden watchword gone
Whereat the world's face glows.

XXXVI

Thy quickening woods rejoice and ring
Till earth seems glorious as the sea :
With yearning love too glad for glee
The world's heart quivers toward the spring
As all our hearts toward thee.

XXXVII

Thee, mother, thee, our queen, who givest
Assurance to the heavens most high
And earth whereon her bondsmen sigh
That by the sea's grace while thou livest
Hope shall not wholly die.

XXXVIII

That while thy free folk hold the van
Of all men, and the sea-spray shed
As dew more heavenly on thy head
Keeps bright thy face in sight of man,
Man's pride shall drop not dead.

XXXIX

A pride more pure than humblest prayer,
More wise than wisdom born of doubt,
Girds for thy sake men's hearts about
With trust and triumph that despair
And fear may cast not out.

XL

Despair may wring men's hearts, and fear
Bow down their heads to kiss the dust,
Where patriot memories rot and rust,
And change makes faint a nation's cheer,
And faith yields up her trust.

XLI

Not here this year have true men known,
Not here this year may true men know,
That brand of shame-compelling woe
Which bids but brave men shrink or groan
And lays but honour low.

XLII

The strong spring wind blows notes of praise,
And hallowing pride of heart, and cheer
Unchanging, toward all true men here
Who hold the trust of ancient days
High as of old this year.

XLIII

The days that made thee great are dead ;
The days that now must keep thee great
Lie not in keeping of thy fate ;
In thine they lie, whose heart and head
Sustain thy charge of state.

XLIV

No state so proud, no pride so just,
The sun, through clouds at sunrise curled
Or clouds across the sunset whirled,
Hath sight of, nor has man such trust
As thine in all the world.

XLV

Each hour that sees the sunset's crest
Make bright thy shores ere day decline
Sees dawn the sun on shores of thine,
Sees west as east and east as west
On thee their sovereign shine.

XLVI

The sea's own heart must needs wax proud
To have borne the world a child like thee.
What birth of earth might ever be
Thy sister? Time, a wandering cloud,
Is sunshine on thy sea.

XLVII

Change mars not her; and thee, our mother,
What change that irks or moves thee mars?
What shock that shakes? what chance that jars?
Time gave thee, as he gave none other,
A station like a star's.

XLVIII

The storm that shrieks, the wind that wages
War with the wings of hopes that climb
Too high toward heaven in doubt sublime,
Assail not thee, approved of ages
The towering crown of time.

XLIX

Toward thee this year thy children turning
With souls uplift of changeless cheer
Salute with love that casts out fear,
With hearts for beacons round thee burning,
The token of this year.

L

With just and sacred jubilation
Let earth sound answer to the sea
For witness, blown on winds as free,
How England, how her crowning nation,
Acclaims this jubilee.

THE ARMADA

1588 : 1888

I

I

England, mother born of seamen, daughter fostered of the sea,
Mother more beloved than all who bear not all their children free,
Reared and nursed and crowned and cherished by the sea-wind and the sun,
Sweetest land and strongest, face most fair and mightiest heart in one,
Stands not higher than when the centuries known of earth were less by three,
When the strength that struck the whole world pale fell back from hers undone.

II

At her feet were the heads of her foes bowed down, and the strengths of the storm of them stayed,
And the hearts that were touched not with mercy with terror were touched and amazed and affrayed :

Yea, hearts that had never been molten with pity
were molten with fear as with flame,
And the priests of the Godhead whose temple is hell,
and his heart is of iron and fire,
And the swordsmen that served and the seamen that
sped them, whom peril could tame not or tire,
Were as foam on the winds of the waters of
England which tempest can tire not or tame.

III

They were girded about with thunder, and lightning
came forth of the rage of their strength,
And the measure that measures the wings of the storm
was the breadth of their force and the length :
And the name of their might was Invincible, covered
and clothed with the terror of God ;
With his wrath were they winged, with his love were
they fired, with the speed of his winds were they
shod ;
With his soul were they filled, in his trust were they
comforted : grace was upon them as night,
And faith as the blackness of darkness : the fume of
their balefires was fair in his sight,
The reek of them sweet as a savour of myrrh in his
nostrils : the world that he made,
Theirs was it by gift of his servants : the wind, if
they spake in his name, was afraid,
And the sun was a shadow before it, the stars were
astonished with fear of it : fire
Went up to them, fed with men living, and lit of
men's hands for a shrine or a pyre ;
And the east and the west wind scattered their ashes
abroad, that his name should be blest
Of the tribes of the chosen whose blessings are curses
from uttermost east unto west.

II

I

Hell for Spain, and heaven for England,—God to God, and man to man,—
Met confronted, light with darkness, life with death: since time began,
Never earth nor sea beheld so great a stake before them set,
Save when Athens hurled back Asia from the lists wherein they met;
Never since the sands of ages through the glass of history ran
Saw the sun in heaven a lordlier day than this that lights us yet.

II

For the light that abides upon England, the glory that rests on her godlike name,
The pride that is love and the love that is faith, a perfume dissolved in flame,
Took fire from the dawn of the fierce July when fleets were scattered as foam
And squadrons as flakes of spray; when galleon and galliass that shadowed the sea
Were swept from her waves like shadows that pass with the clouds they fell from, and she
Laughed loud to the wind as it gave to her keeping the glories of Spain and Rome.

III

Three hundred summers have fallen as leaves by the storms in their season thinned,
Since northward the war-ships of Spain came sheer up the way of the south-west wind :
Where the citadel cliffs of England are flanked with bastions of serpentine,
Far off to the windward loomed their hulls, an hundred and twenty-nine,
All filled full of the war, full-fraught with battle and charged with bale ;
Then store-ships weighted with cannon ; and all were an hundred and fifty sail.
The measureless menace of darkness anhungered with hope to prevail upon light,
The shadow of death made substance, the present and visible spirit of night,
Came, shaped as a waxing or waning moon that rose with the fall of day,
To the channel where couches the Lion in guard of the gate of the lustrous bay.
Fair England, sweet as the sea that shields her, and pure as the sea from stain,
Smiled, hearing hardly for scorn that stirred her the menace of saintly Spain.

III

I

"They that ride over ocean wide with hempen bridle
and horse of tree,"
How shall they in the darkening day of wrath and
anguish and fear go free?
How shall these that have curbed the seas not feel
his bridle who made the sea?

God shall bow them and break them now: for what
is man in the Lord God's sight?
Fear shall shake them, and shame shall break, and
all the noon of their pride be night:
These that sinned shall the ravening wind of doom
bring under, and judgment smite.

England broke from her neck the yoke, and rent the
fetter, and mocked the rod:
Shrines of old that she decked with gold she turned
to dust, to the dust she trod:
What is she, that the wind and sea should fight
beside her, and war with God?

Lo, the cloud of his ships that crowd her channel's
inlet with storm sublime,
Darker far than the tempests are that sweep the skies
of her northmost clime;
Huge and dense as the walls that fence the secret
darkness of unknown time.

Mast on mast as a tower goes past, and sail by sail
as a cloud's wing spread ;
Fleet by fleet, as the throngs whose feet keep time
with death in his dance of dread ;
Galleons dark as the helmsman's bark of old that
ferried to hell the dead.

Squadrons proud as their lords, and loud with tramp
of soldiers and chant of priests ;
Slaves there told by the thousandfold, made fast in
bondage as herded beasts ;
Lords and slaves that the sweet free waves shall feed
on, satiate with funeral feasts.

Nay, not so shall it be, they know ; their priests have
said it ; can priesthood lie ?
God shall keep them, their God shall sleep not : peril
and evil shall pass them by :
Nay, for these are his children ; seas and winds shall
bid not his children die.

II

So they boast them, the monstrous host whose
menace mocks at the dawn : and here
They that wait at the wild sea's gate, and watch the
darkness of doom draw near,
How shall they in their evil day sustain the strength
of their hearts for fear ?

Full July in the fervent sky sets forth her twentieth
of changing morns :
Winds fall mild that of late waxed wild : no presage
whispers or wails or warns :
Far to west on the bland sea's breast a sailing crescent
uprears her horns.

Seven wide miles the serene sea smiles between them
stretching from rim to rim :
Soft they shine, but a darker sign should bid not
hope or belief wax dim :
God's are these men, and not the sea's : their trust
is set not on her but him.

God's ? but who is the God whereto the prayers and
incense of these men rise ?
What is he, that the wind and sea should fear him,
quelled by his sunbright eyes ?
What, that men should return again, and hail him
Lord of the servile skies ?

Hell's own flame at his heavenly name leaps higher
and laughs, and its gulfs rejoice :
Plague and death from his baneful breath take life
and lighten, and praise his choice :
Chosen are they to devour for prey the tribes that
hear not and fear his voice.

Ay, but we that the wind and sea gird round with
shelter of storms and waves
Know not him that ye worship, grim as dreams that
quicken from dead men's graves :
God is one with the sea, the sun, the land that nursed
us, the love that saves.

Love whose heart is in ours, and part of all things
noble and all things fair ;
Sweet and free as the circling sea, sublime and kind
as the fostering air ;
Pure of shame as is England's name, whose crowns
to come are as crowns that were.

IV

I

But the Lord of darkness, the God whose love is a flaming fire,
The master whose mercy fulfils wide hell till its torturers tire,
He shall surely have heed of his servants who serve him for love, not hire.

They shall fetter the wing of the wind whose pinions are plumed with foam :
For now shall thy horn be exalted, and now shall thy bolt strike home ;
Yea, now shall thy kingdom come, Lord God of the priests of Rome.

They shall cast thy curb on the waters, and bridle the waves of the sea :
They shall say to her, Peace, be still : and stillness and peace shall be :
And the winds and the storms shall hear them, and tremble, and worship thee.

Thy breath shall darken the morning, and wither the mounting sun ;
And the daysprings, frozen and fettered, shall know thee, and cease to run ;
The heart of the world shall feel thee, and die, and thy will be done.

The spirit of man that would sound thee, and search
out causes of things,
Shall shrink and subside and praise thee : and wisdom,
with plume-plucked wings,
Shall cower at thy feet and confess thee, that none
may fathom thy springs.

The fountains of song that await but the wind of an
April to be
To burst the bonds of the winter, and speak with the
sound of a sea,
The blast of thy mouth shall quench them : and song
shall be only of thee.

The days that are dead shall quicken, the seasons
that were shall return ;
And the streets and the pastures of England, the
woods that burgeon and yearn,
Shall be whitened with ashes of women and children
and men that burn.

For the mother shall burn with the babe sprung forth
of her womb in fire,
And bride with bridegroom, and brother with sister,
and son with sire ;
And the noise of the flames shall be sweet in thine
ears as the sound of a lyre.

Yea, so shall thy kingdom be stablished, and so shall
the signs of it be :
And the world shall know, and the wind shall speak,
and the sun shall see,
That these are the works of thy servants, whose
works bear witness to thee.

II

But the dusk of the day falls fruitless, whose light
should have lit them on :
Sails flash through the gloom to shoreward, eclipsed
as the sun that shone :
And the west wind wakes with dawn, and the hope
that was here is gone.

Around they wheel and around, two knots to the
Spaniard's one,
The wind-swift warriors of England, who shoot as
with shafts of the sun,
With fourfold shots for the Spaniard's, that spare
not till day be done.

And the wind with the sundown sharpens, and hurtles
the ships to the lee,
And Spaniard on Spaniard smites, and shatters, and
yields ; and we,
Ere battle begin, stand lords of the battle, acclaimed
of the sea.

And the day sweeps round to the nightward ; and
heavy and hard the waves
Roll in on the herd of the hurtling galleons ; and
masters and slaves
Reel blind in the grasp of the dark strong wind that
shall dig their graves.

For the sepulchres hollowed and shaped of the wind
in the swerve of the seas,
The graves that gape for their pasture, and laugh,
thrilled through by the breeze,
The sweet soft merciless waters, await and are fain
of these.

As the hiss of a Python heaving in menace of doom
to be
They hear through the clear night round them,
whose hours are as clouds that flee,
The whisper of tempest sleeping, the heave and the
hiss of the sea.

But faith is theirs, and with faith are they girded
and helmed and shod :
Invincible are they, almighty, elect for a sword and
a rod ;
Invincible even as their God is omnipotent, infinite,
God.

In him is their strength, who have sworn that his
glory shall wax not dim :
In his name are their war-ships hallowed as mightiest
of all that swim :
The men that shall cope with these, and conquer,
shall cast out him.

In him is the trust of their hearts ; the desire of their
eyes is he ;
The light of their ways, made lightning for men
that would fain be free :
Earth's hosts are with them, and with them is heaven :
but with us is the sea.

V

I

And a day and a night pass over ;
And the heart of their chief swells high ;
For England, the warrior, the rover,
Whose banners on all winds fly,
Soul-stricken, he saith, by the shadow of death, holds off him, and draws not nigh.

And the wind and the dawn together
Make in from the gleaming east :
And fain of the wild glad weather
As famine is fain of feast,
And fain of the fight, forth sweeps in its might the host of the Lord's high priest.

And lightly before the breeze
The ships of his foes take wing :
Are they scattered, the lords of the seas ?
Are they broken, the foes of the king ?
And ever now higher as a mounting fire the hopes of the Spaniard spring.

And a windless night comes down :
And a breezeless morning, bright
With promise of praise to crown
The close of the crowning fight,
Leaps up as the foe's heart leaps, and glows with lustrous rapture of light.

And stinted of gear for battle
The ships of the sea's folk lie,
Unwarlike, herded as cattle,
Six miles from the foeman's eye
That fastens as flame on the sight of them tame and offenceless, and ranged as to die.

Surely the souls in them quail,
They are stricken and withered at heart,
When in on them, sail by sail,
Fierce marvels of monstrous art,
Tower darkening on tower till the sea-winds cower crowds down as to hurl them apart.

And the windless weather is kindly,
And comforts the host in these;
And their hearts are uplift in them blindly,
And blindly they boast at ease
That the next day's fight shall exalt them, and smite with destruction the lords of the seas.

II

And lightly the proud hearts prattle,
And lightly the dawn draws nigh,
The dawn of the doom of the battle
When these shall falter and fly;
No day more great in the roll of fate filled ever with fire the sky.

To fightward they go as to feastward,
And the tempest of ships that drive
Sets eastward ever and eastward,
Till closer they strain and strive;
And the shots that rain on the hulls of Spain are as thunders afire and alive.

And about them the blithe sea smiles
And flashes to windward and lee
Round capes and headlands and isles
That heed not if war there be ;
Round Sark, round Wight, green jewels of light in the ring of the golden sea.

But the men that within them abide
Are stout of spirit and stark
As rocks that repel the tide,
As day that repels the dark ;
And the light bequeathed from their swords unsheathed shines lineal on Wight and on Sark.

And eastward the storm sets ever,
The storm of the sails that strain
And follow and close and sever
And lose and return and gain ;
And English thunder divides in sunder the holds of the ships of Spain.

Southward to Calais, appalled
And astonished, the vast fleet veers ;
And the skies are shrouded and palled,
But the moonless midnight hears
And sees now swift on them drive and drift strange flames that the darkness fears.

They fly through the night from shoreward,
Heart-stricken till morning break,
And ever to scourge them forward
Drives down on them England's Drake,
And hurls them in as they hurtle and spin and stagger, with storm to wake.

VI

I

And now is their time come on them. For eastward they drift and reel,
With the shallows of Flanders ahead, with destruction and havoc at heel,
With God for their comfort only, the God whom they serve ; and here
Their Lord, of his great loving-kindness, may revel and make good cheer ;
Though ever his lips wax thirstier with drinking, and hotter the lusts in him swell ;
For he feeds the thirst that consumes him with blood, and his winepress fumes with the reek of hell.

II

Fierce noon beats hard on the battle ; the galleons that loom to the lee
Bow down, heel over, uplifting their shelterless hulls from the sea :
From scuppers aspirt with blood, from guns dismounted and dumb,
The signs of the doom they looked for, the loud mute witnesses come.
They press with sunset to seaward for comfort : and shall not they find it there ?
O servants of God most high, shall his winds not pass you by, and his waves not spare ?

III

The wings of the south-west wind are widened; the breath of his fervent lips,
More keen than a sword's edge, fiercer than fire, falls full on the plunging ships.
The pilot is he of their northward flight, their stay and their steersman he;
A helmsman clothed with the tempest, and girdled with strength to constrain the sea.
And the host of them trembles and quails, caught fast in his hand as a bird in the toils;
For the wrath and the joy that fulfil him are mightier than man's, whom he slays and spoils.
And vainly, with heart divided in sunder, and labour of wavering will,
The lord of their host takes counsel with hope if haply their star shine still,
If haply some light be left them of chance to renew and redeem the fray;
But the will of the black south-wester is lord of the councils of war to-day.
One only spirit it quells not, a splendour undarkened of chance or time;
Be the praise of his foes with Oquendo for ever, a name as a star sublime.
But here what aid in a hero's heart, what help in his hand may be?
For ever the dark wind whitens and blackens the hollows and heights of the sea,
And galley by galley, divided and desolate, founders; and none takes heed,
Nor foe nor friend, if they perish; forlorn, cast off in their uttermost need,

They sink in the whelm of the waters, as pebbles by children from shoreward hurled,
In the North Sea's waters that end not, nor know they a bourn but the bourn of the world.
Past many a secure unavailable harbour, and many a loud stream's mouth,
Past Humber and Tees and Tyne and Tweed, they fly, scourged on from the south,
And torn by the scourge of the storm-wind that smites as a harper smites on a lyre,
And consumed of the storm as the sacrifice loved of their God is consumed with fire,
And devoured of the darkness as men that are slain in the fires of his love are devoured,
And deflowered of their lives by the storms, as by priests is the spirit of life deflowered.
For the wind, of its godlike mercy, relents not, and hounds them ahead to the north,
With English hunters at heel, till now is the herd of them past the Forth,
All huddled and hurtled seaward ; and now need none wage war upon these,
Nor huntsmen follow the quarry whose fall is the pastime sought of the seas.
Day upon day upon day confounds them, with measureless mists that swell,
With drift of rains everlasting and dense as the fumes of ascending hell.
The visions of priest and of prophet beholding his enemies bruised of his rod
Beheld but the likeness of this that is fallen on the faithful, the friends of God.

Northward, and northward, and northward they
stagger and shudder and swerve and flit,
Dismantled of masts and of yards, with sails by the
fangs of the storm-wind split.
But north of the headland whose name is Wrath, by
the wrath or the ruth of the sea,
They are swept or sustained to the westward, and
drive through the rollers aloof to the lee.
Some strive yet northward for Iceland, and perish :
but some through the storm-hewn straits
That sunder the Shetlands and Orkneys are borne of
the breath which is God's or fate's :
And some, by the dawn of September, at last give
thanks as for stars that smile,
For the winds have swept them to shelter and sight
of the cliffs of a Catholic isle.
Though many the fierce rocks feed on, and many the
merciless heretic slays,
Yet some that have laboured to land with their
treasure are trustful, and give God praise.
And the kernes of murderous Ireland, athirst with a
greed everlasting of blood,
Unslakable ever with slaughter and spoil, rage down
as a ravening flood,
To slay and to flay of their shining apparel their
brethren whom shipwreck spares ;
Such faith and such mercy, such love and such
manhood, such hands and such hearts are theirs.
Short shrift to her foes gives England, but shorter
doth Ireland to friends ; and worse
Fare they that came with a blessing on treason than
they that come with a curse.

Hacked, harried, and mangled of axes and skenes, three thousand naked and dead
Bear witness of Catholic Ireland, what sons of what sires at her breasts are bred.
Winds are pitiful, waves are merciful, tempest and storm are kind :
The waters that smite may spare, and the thunder is deaf, and the lightning is blind :
Of these perchance at his need may a man, though they know it not, yet find grace ;
But grace, if another be hardened against him, he gets not at this man's face.
For his ear that hears and his eye that sees the wreck and the wail of men,
And his heart that relents not within him, but hungers, are like as the wolf's in his den.
Worthy are these to worship their master, the murderous Lord of lies,
Who hath given to the pontiff his servant the keys of the pit and the keys of the skies.
Wild famine and red-shod rapine are cruel, and bitter with blood are their feasts ;
But fiercer than famine and redder than rapine the hands and the hearts of priests.
God, God bade these to the battle ; and here, on a land by his servants trod,
They perish, a lordly blood-offering, subdued by the hands of the servants of God.
These also were fed of his priests with faith, with the milk of his word and the wine ;
These too are fulfilled with the spirit of darkness that guided their quest divine

And here, cast up from the ravening sea on the mild land's merciful breast,
This comfort they find of their fellows in worship ; this guerdon is theirs of their quest.
Death was captain, and doom was pilot, and darkness the chart of their way ;
Night and hell had in charge and in keeping the host of the foes of day.
Invincible, vanquished, impregnable, shattered, a sign to her foes of fear,
A sign to the world and the stars of laughter, the fleet of the Lord lies here.
Nay, for none may declare the place of the ruin wherein she lies ;
Nay, for none hath beholden the grave whence never a ghost shall rise.
The fleet of the foemen of England hath found not one but a thousand graves ;
And he that shall number and name them shall number by name and by tale the waves.

VII

I

Sixtus, Pope of the Church whose hope takes flight for heaven to dethrone the sun,
Philip, king that wouldst turn our spring to winter, blasted, appalled, undone,
Prince and priest, let a mourner's feast give thanks to God for your conquest won.

England's heel is upon you : kneel, O priest, O prince, in the dust, and cry,
"Lord, why thus? art thou wroth with us whose faith was great in thee, God most high?
Whence is this, that the serpent's hiss derides us? Lord, can thy pledged word lie?

"God of hell, are its flames that swell quenched now for ever, extinct and dead?
Who shall fear thee? or who shall hear the word thy servants who feared thee said?
Lord, art thou as the dead gods now, whose arm is shortened, whose rede is read?

"Yet we thought it was not for nought thy word was given us, to guard and guide :
Yet we deemed that they had not dreamed who put their trust in thee. Hast thou lied?
God our Lord, was the sacred sword we drew not drawn on thy Church's side?

"England hates thee as hell's own gates; and England triumphs, and Rome bows down :
England mocks at thee; England's rocks cast off thy servants to drive and drown :
England loathes thee; and fame betroths and plights with England her faith for crown.

"Spain clings fast to thee; Spain, aghast with anguish, cries to thee; where art thou?
Spain puts trust in thee; lo, the dust that soils and darkens her prostrate brow!
Spain is true to thy service; who shall raise up Spain for thy service now?

"Who shall praise thee, if none may raise thy servants
up, nor affright thy foes?
Winter wanes, and the woods and plains forget the
likeness of storms and snows:
So shall fear of thee fade even here: and what shall
follow thee no man knows."

Lords of night, who would breathe your blight on
April's morning and August's noon,
God your Lord, the condemned, the abhorred, sinks
hellward, smitten with deathlike swoon:
Death's own dart in his hateful heart now thrills, and
night shall receive him soon.

God the Devil, thy reign of revel is here for ever
eclipsed and fled:
God the Liar, everlasting fire lays hold at last on thee,
hand and head:
God the Accurst, the consuming thirst that burns
thee never shall here be fed.

II

England, queen of the waves whose green inviolate
girdle enrings thee round,
Mother fair as the morning, where is now the place
of thy foemen found?
Still the sea that salutes us free proclaims them
stricken, acclaims thee crowned.

Times may change, and the skies grow strange with
signs of treason and fraud and fear:
Foes in union of strange communion may rise against
thee from far and near:
Sloth and greed on thy strength may feed as cankers
waxing from year to year.

Yet, though treason and fierce unreason should league
and lie and defame and smite,
We that know thee, how far below thee the hatred
burns of the sons of night,
We that love thee, behold above thee the witness
written of life in light.

Life that shines from thee shows forth signs that
none may read not but eyeless foes :
Hate, born blind, in his abject mind grows hopeful
now but as madness grows :
Love, born wise, with exultant eyes adores thy glory,
beholds and glows.

Truth is in thee, and none may win thee to lie, for-
saking the face of truth :
Freedom lives by the grace she gives thee, born again
from thy deathless youth :
Faith should fail, and the world turn pale, wert thou
the prey of the serpent's tooth.

Greed and fraud, unabashed, unawed, may strive to
sting thee at heel in vain :
Craft and fear and mistrust may leer and mourn and
murmur and plead and plain :
Thou art thou : and thy sunbright brow is hers that
blasted the strength of Spain.

Mother, mother beloved, none other could claim in
place of thee England's place :
Earth bears none that beholds the sun so pure of
record, so clothed with grace :
Dear our mother, nor son nor brother is thine, as
strong or as fair of face.

How shalt thou be abased? or how shall fear take
hold of thy heart? of thine,
England, maiden immortal, laden with charge of life
and with hopes divine?
Earth shall wither, when eyes turned hither behold
not light in her darkness shine.

England, none that is born thy son, and lives, by
grace of thy glory, free,
Lives and yearns not at heart and burns with hope
to serve as he worships thee;
None may sing thee: the sea-wind's wing beats down
our songs as it hails the sea.

TO A SEAMEW

When I had wings, my brother,
  Such wings were mine as thine:
Such life my heart remembers
In all as wild Septembers
As this when life seems other,
  Though sweet, than once was mine;
When I had wings, my brother,
  Such wings were mine as thine.

Such life as thrills and quickens
  The silence of thy flight,
Or fills thy note's elation
With lordlier exultation
Than man's, whose faint heart sickens
  With hopes and fears that blight
Such life as thrills and quickens
  The silence of thy flight.

Thy cry from windward clanging
  Makes all the cliffs rejoice;
Though storm clothe seas with sorrow,
Thy call salutes the morrow;
While shades of pain seem hanging
  Round earth's most rapturous voice,
Thy cry from windward clanging
  Makes all the cliffs rejoice.

We, sons and sires of seamen,
Whose home is all the sea,
What place man may, we claim it;
But thine—whose thought may name it?
Free birds live higher than freemen,
And gladlier ye than we—
We, sons and sires of seamen,
Whose home is all the sea.

For you the storm scunds only
More notes of more delight
Than earth's in sunniest weather:
When heaven and sea together
Join strengths against the lonely
Lost bark borne down by night
For you the storm sounds only
More notes of more delight.

With wider wing, and louder
Long clarion-call of joy,
Thy tribe salutes the terror
Of darkness, wild as error,
But sure as truth, and prouder
Than waves with man for toy;
With wider wing, and louder
Long clarion-call of joy.

The wave's wing spreads and flutters,
The wave's heart swells and breaks;
One moment's passion thrills it,
One pulse of power fulfils it
And ends the pride it utters
When, loud with life that quakes,
The wave's wing spreads and flutters,
The wave's heart swells and breaks.

But thine and thou, my brother,
Keep heart and wing more high
Than aught may scare or sunder;
The waves whose throats are thunder
Fall hurtling each on other,
And triumph as they die;
But thine and thou, my brother,
Keep heart and wing more high.

More high than wrath or anguish,
More strong than pride or fear,
The sense or soul half hidden
In thee, for us forbidden,
Bids thee nor change nor languish,
But live thy life as here,
More high than wrath or anguish,
More strong than pride or fear.

We are fallen, even we, whose passion
On earth is nearest thine;
Who sing, and cease from flying;
Who live, and dream of dying:
Grey time, in time's grey fashion,
Bids wingless creatures pine:
We are fallen, even we, whose passion
On earth is nearest thine.

The lark knows no such rapture,
Such joy no nightingale,
As sways the songless measure
Wherein thy wings take pleasure:
Thy love may no man capture,
Thy pride may no man quail;
The lark knows no such rapture,
Such joy no nightingale.

And we, whom dreams embolden,
We can but creep and sing
And watch through heaven's waste hollow
The flight no sight may follow
To the utter bourne beholden
Of none that lack thy wing :
And we, whom dreams embolden,
We can but creep and sing.

Our dreams have wings that falter,
Our hearts bear hopes that die ;
For thee no dream could better
A life no fears may fetter,
A pride no care can alter,
That wots not whence or why
Our dreams have wings that falter,
Our hearts bear hopes that die.

With joy more fierce and sweeter
Than joys we deem divine
Their lives, by time untarnished,
Are girt about and garnished,
Who match the wave's full metre
And drink the wind's wild wine
With joy more fierce and sweeter
Than joys we deem divine.

Ah, well were I for ever,
Wouldst thou change lives with me,
And take my song's wild honey,
And give me back thy sunny
Wide eyes that weary never,
And wings that search the sea ;
Ah, well were I for ever,
Wouldst thou change lives with me.

Beachy Head : September 1886.

PAN AND THALASSIUS

A LYRICAL IDYL

THALASSIUS

PAN!

PAN

O sea-stray, seed of Apollo,
What word wouldst thou have with me?
My ways thou wast fain to follow
Or ever the years hailed thee
Man.

Now
If August brood on the valleys,
If satyrs laugh on the lawns,
What part in the wildwood alleys
Hast thou with the fleet-foot fauns—
Thou?

See!
Thy feet are a man's—not cloven
Like these, not light as a boy's:
The tresses and tendrils inwoven
That lure us, the lure of them cloys
Thee.

Us
The joy of the wild woods never
Leaves free of the thirst it slakes:
The wild love throbs in us ever
That burns in the dense hot brakes
Thus.

Life,
Eternal, passionate, awless,
Insatiable, mutable, dear,
Makes all men's law for us lawless:
We strive not: how should we fear
Strife?

We,
The birds and the bright winds know not
Such joys as are ours in the mild
Warm woodland; joys such as grow not
In waste green fields of the wild
Sea.

No;
Long since, in the world's wind veering,
Thy heart was estranged from me:
Sweet Echo shall yield thee not hearing:
What have we to do with thee?
Go.

THALASSIUS

Ay!
Such wrath on thy nostril quivers
As once in Sicilian heat
Bade herdsmen quail, and the rivers
Shrank, leaving a path for thy feet
Dry?

Nay,
Low down in the hot soft hollow
Too snakelike hisses thy spleen :
"O sea-stray, seed of Apollo!"
What ill hast thou heard or seen?
Say.

Man
Knows well, if he hears beside him
The snarl of thy wrath at noon,
What evil may soon betide him,
Or late, if thou smite not soon,
Pan.

Me
The sound of thy flute, that flatters
The woods as they smile and sigh,
Charmed fast as it charms thy satyrs,
Can charm no faster than I
Thee.

Fast
Thy music may charm the splendid
Wide woodland silence to sleep
With sounds and dreams of thee blended
And whispers of waters that creep
Past.

Here
The spell of thee breathes and passes
And bids the heart in me pause,
Hushed soft as the leaves and the grasses
Are hushed if the storm's foot draws
Near.

Yet
The panic that strikes down strangers
Transgressing thy ways unaware
Affrights not me nor endangers
Through dread of thy secret snare
Set.

PAN

Whence
May man find heart to deride me?
Who made his face as a star
To shine as a God's beside me?
Nay, get thee away from us, far
Hence.

THALASSIUS

Then
Shall no man's heart, as he raises
A hymn to thy secret head,
Wax great with the godhead he praises?
Thou, God, shalt be like unto dead
Men.

PAN

Grace
I take not of men's thanksgiving,
I crave not of lips that live;
They die, and behold, I am living,
While they and their dead Gods give
Place.

THALASSIUS

Yea :
Too lightly the words were spoken
That mourned or mocked at thee dead :
But whose was the word, the token,
The song that answered and said
Nay ?

PAN

Whose
But mine, in the midnight hidden,
Clothed round with the strength of night
And mysteries of things forbidden
For all but the one most bright
Muse ?

THALASSIUS

Hers
Or thine, O Pan, was the token
That gave back empire to thee
When power in thy hands lay broken
As reeds that quake if a bee
Stirs ?

PAN

Whom
Have I in my wide woods need of?
Urania's limitless eyes
Behold not mine end, though they read of
A word that shall speak to the skies
Doom.

THALASSIUS

She
Gave back to thee kingdom and glory,
And grace that was thine of yore,
And life to thy leaves, late hoary
As weeds cast up from the hoar
Sea.

Song
Can bid faith shine as the morning
Though light in the world be none :
Death shrinks if her tongue sound warning,
Night quails, and beholds the sun
Strong.

PAN

Night
Bare rule over men for ages
Whose worship wist not of me
And gat but sorrows for wages,
And hardly for tears could see
Light.

Call
No more on the starry presence
Whose light through the long dark swam :
Hold fast to the green world's pleasance :
For I that am lord of it am
All.

THALASSIUS

God,
God Pan, from the glad wood's portal
The breaths of thy song blow sweet:
But woods may be walked in of mortal
Man's thought, where never thy feet
Trod.

Thine
All secrets of growth and of birth are,
All glories of flower and of tree,
Wheresoever the wonders of earth are;
The words of the spell of the sea
Mine.

A BALLAD OF BATH

Like a queen enchanted who may not laugh or weep,
Glad at heart and guarded from change and care like ours,
Girt about with beauty by days and nights that creep
Soft as breathless ripples that softly shoreward sweep,
Lies the lovely city whose grace no grief deflowers.
Age and grey forgetfulness, time that shifts and veers,
Touch not thee, our fairest, whose charm no rival nears,
Hailed as England's Florence of one whose praise gives grace,
Landor, once thy lover, a name that love reveres:
Dawn and noon and sunset are one before thy face.

Dawn whereof we know not, and noon whose fruit we reap,
Garnered up in record of years that fell like flowers,
Sunset liker sunrise along the shining steep
Whence thy fair face lightens, and where thy soft springs leap,
Crown at once and gird thee with grace of guardian powers

Loved of men beloved of us, souls that fame inspheres,
All thine air hath music for him who dreams and hears;
Voices mixed of multitudes, feet of friends that pace,
Witness why for ever, if heaven's face clouds or clears,
Dawn and noon and sunset are one before thy face.

Peace hath here found harbourage mild as very sleep:
Not the hills and waters, the fields and wildwood bowers,
Smile or speak more tenderly, clothed with peace more deep,
Here than memory whispers of days our memories keep
Fast with love and laughter and dreams of withered hours.
Bright were these as blossom of old, and thought endears
Still the fair soft phantoms that pass with smiles or tears,
Sweet as roseleaves hoarded and dried wherein we trace
Still the soul and spirit of sense that lives and cheers:
Dawn and noon and sunset are one before thy face.

City lulled asleep by the chime of passing years,
Sweeter smiles thy rest than the radiance round thy peers;
Only love and lovely remembrance here have place.
Time on thee lies lighter than music on men's ears;
Dawn and noon and sunset are one before thy face.

IN A GARDEN

Baby, see the flowers !
—Baby sees
Fairer things than these,
Fairer though they be than dreams of ours.

Baby, hear the birds !
—Baby knows
Better songs than those,
Sweeter though they sound than sweetest words

Baby, see the moon !
—Baby's eyes
Laugh to watch it rise,
Answering light with love and night with noon.

Baby, hear the sea !
—Baby's face
Takes a graver grace,
Touched with wonder what the sound may be

Baby, see the star !
—Baby's hand
Opens, warm and bland,
Calm in claim of all things fair that are.

Baby, hear the bells !
—Baby's head
Bows, as ripe for bed,
Now the flowers curl round and close their cells.

Baby, flower of light,
Sleep, and see
Brighter dreams than we,
Till good day shall smile away good night.

A RHYME

Babe, if rhyme be none
For that sweet small word
Babe, the sweetest one
Ever heard,

Right it is and meet
Rhyme should keep not true
Time with such a sweet
Thing as you.

Meet it is that rhyme
Should not gain such grace:
What is April's prime
To your face?

What to yours is May's
Rosiest smile? what sound
Like your laughter sways
All hearts round?

None can tell in metre
Fit for ears on earth
What sweet star grew sweeter
At your birth.

Wisdom doubts what may be :
  Hope, with smile sublime,
Trusts : but neither, baby,
    Knows the rhyme.

Wisdom lies down lonely ;
  Hope keeps watch from far ;
None but one seer only
    Sees the star.

Love alone, with yearning
  Heart for astrolabe,
Takes the star's height, burning
    O'er the babe.

BABY-BIRD

Baby-bird, baby-bird,
  Ne'er a song on earth
May be heard, may be heard,
  Rich as yours in mirth.

All your flickering fingers,
  All your twinkling toes,
Play like light that lingers
  Till the clear song close.

Baby-bird, baby-bird,
  Your grave majestic eyes
Like a bird's warbled words
  Speak, and sorrow dies.

Sorrow dies for love's sake,
  Love grows one with mirth,
Even for one white dove's sake,
  Born a babe on earth.

Baby-bird, baby-bird,
  Chirping loud and long,
Other birds hush their words,
  Hearkening toward your song.

Sweet as spring though it ring,
  Full of love's own lures,
Weak and wrong sounds their song,
  Singing after yours.

Baby-bird, baby-bird,
  The happy heart that hears
Seems to win back within
  Heaven, and cast out fears.

Earth and sun seem as one
  Sweet light and one sweet word
Known of none here but one,
  Known of one sweet bird.

OLIVE

I

Who may praise her?
Eyes where midnight shames the sun,
Hair of night and sunshine spun,
Woven of dawn's or twilight's loom,
Radiant darkness, lustrous gloom,
Godlike childhood's flowerlike bloom,
None may praise aright, nor sing
Half the grace wherewith like spring
Love arrays her.

II

Love untold
Sings in silence, speaks in light
Shed from each fair feature, bright
Still from heaven, whence toward us, now
Nine years since, she deigned to bow
Down the brightness of her brow,
Deigned to pass through mortal birth:
Reverence calls her, here on earth,
Nine years old.

III

Love's deep duty,
Even when love transfigured grows
Worship, all too surely knows
How, though love may cast out fear,
Yet the debt divine and dear
Due to childhood's godhead here
May by love of man be paid
Never; never song be made
Worth its beauty.

IV

Nought is all
Sung or said or dreamed or thought
Ever, set beside it; nought
All the love that man may give—
Love whose prayer should be, "Forgive!"
Heaven, we see, on earth may live;
Earth can thank not heaven, we know,
Save with songs that ebb and flow,
Rise and fall.

V

No man living,
No man dead, save haply one
Now gone homeward past the sun,
Ever found such grace as might
Tune his tongue to praise aright
Children, flowers of love and light,
Whom our praise dispraises: we
Sing, in sooth, but not as he
Sang thanksgiving.

VI

Hope that smiled,
Seeing her new-born beauty, made
Out of heaven's own light and shade,
Smiled not half so sweetly : love,
Seeing the sun, afar above,
Warm the nest that rears the dove,
Sees, more bright than moon or sun,
All the heaven of heavens in one
Little child.

VII

Who may sing her?
Wings of angels when they stir
Make no music worthy her :
Sweeter sound her shy soft words
Here than songs of God's own birds
Whom the fire of rapture girds
Round with light from love's face lit ;
Hands of angels find no fit
Gifts to bring her.

VIII

Babes at birth
Wear as raiment round them cast,
Keep as witness toward their past,
Tokens left of heaven ; and each,
Ere its lips learn mortal speech,
Ere sweet heaven pass on pass reach,
Bears in undiverted eyes
Proof of unforgotten skies
Here on earth.

IX

Quenched as embers
Quenched with flakes of rain or snow
Till the last faint flame burns low,
All those lustrous memories lie
Dead with babyhood gone by:
Yet in her they dare not die:
Others, fair as heaven is, yet,
Now they share not heaven, forget:
She remembers.

A WORD WITH THE WIND

Lord of days and nights that hear thy word of wintry warning,
Wind, whose feet are set on ways that none may tread,
Change the nest wherein thy wings are fledged for flight by morning,
Change the harbour whence at dawn thy sails are spread.
Not the dawn, ere yet the imprisoning night has half released her,
More desires the sun's full face of cheer, than we,
Well as yet we love the strength of the iron-tongued north-easter,
Yearn for wind to meet us as we front the sea.
All thy ways are good, O wind, and all the world should fester,
Were thy fourfold godhead quenched, or stilled thy strife:
Yet the waves and we desire too long the deep south-wester,
Whence the waters quicken shoreward, clothed with life.

Yet the field not made for ploughing save of keels
nor harrowing
Save of storm-winds lies unbrightened by thy
breath :
Banded broad with ruddy samphire glow the sea-
banks narrowing
Westward, while the sea gleams chill and still as
death.
Sharp and strange from inland sounds thy bitter note
of battle,
Blown between grim skies and waters sullen-souled,
Till the baffled seas bear back, rocks roar and shingles
rattle,
Vexed and angered and anhungered and acold.
Change thy note, and give the waves their will, and
all the measure,
Full and perfect, of the music of their might,
Let it fill the bays with thunderous notes and throbs
of pleasure,
Shake the shores with passion, sound at once and
smite.
Sweet are even the mild low notes of wind and sea,
but sweeter
Sounds the song whose choral wrath of raging
rhyme
Bids the shelving shoals keep tune with storm's im-
perious metre,
Bids the rocks and reefs respond in rapturous chime.
Sweet the lisp and lulling whisper and luxurious
laughter,
Soft as love or sleep, of waves whereon the sun
Dreams, and dreams not of the darkling hours before
nor after,
Winged with cloud whose wrath shall bid love's
day be done.

Yet shall darkness bring the awakening sea a lordlier lover,
Clothed with strength more amorous and more strenuous will,
Whence her heart of hearts shall kindle and her soul recover
Sense of love too keen to lie for love's sake still.
Let thy strong south-western music sound, and bid the billows
Brighten, proud and glad to feel thy scourge and kiss
Sting and soothe and sway them, bowed as aspens bend or willows,
Yet resurgent still in breathless rage of bliss.
All to-day the slow sleek ripples hardly bear up shoreward,
Charged with sighs more light than laughter, faint and fair,
Like a woodland lake's weak wavelets lightly lingering forward,
Soft and listless as the slumber-stricken air.
Be the sunshine bared or veiled, the sky superb or shrouded,
Still the waters, lax and languid, chafed and foiled,
Keen and thwarted, pale and patient, clothed with fire or clouded,
Vex their heart in vain, or sleep like serpents coiled.
Thee they look for, blind and baffled, wan with wrath and weary,
Blown for ever back by winds that rock the bird :
Winds that seamews breast subdue the sea, and bid the dreary
Waves be weak as hearts made sick with hope deferred.

Let thy clarion sound from westward, let the south bear token
How the glories of thy godhead sound and shine:
Bid the land rejoice to see the land-wind's broad wings broken,
Bid the sea take comfort, bid the world be thine.
Half the world abhors thee beating back the sea, and blackening
Heaven with fierce and woful change of fluctuant form:
All the world acclaims thee shifting sail again, and slackening
Cloud by cloud the close-reefed cordage of the storm.
Sweeter fields and brighter woods and lordlier hills than waken
Here at sunrise never hailed the sun and thee:
Turn thee then, and give them comfort, shed like rain and shaken
Far as foam that laughs and leaps along the sea.

NEAP-TIDE

Far off is the sea, and the land is afar:
The low banks reach at the sky,
Seen hence, and are heavenward high;
Though light for the leap of a boy they are,
And the far sea late was nigh.

The fair wild fields and the circling downs,
The bright sweet marshes and meads
All glorious with flowerlike weeds,
The great grey churches, the sea-washed towns,
Recede as a dream recedes.

The world draws back, and the world's light wanes,
As a dream dies down and is dead;
And the clouds and the gleams overhead
Change, and change; and the sea remains,
A shadow of dreamlike dread.

Wild, and woful, and pale, and grey,
A shadow of sleepless fear,
A corpse with the night for bier,
The fairest thing that beholds the day
Lies haggard and hopeless here.

And the wind's wings, broken and spent, subside;
And the dumb waste world is hoar,
And strange as the sea the shore;
And shadows of shapeless dreams abide
Where life may abide no more.

A sail to seaward, a sound from shoreward,
And the spell were broken that seems
To reign in a world of dreams
Where vainly the dreamer's feet make forward
And vainly the low sky gleams.

The sea-forsaken forlorn deep-wrinkled
Salt slanting stretches of sand
That slope to the seaward hand,
Were they fain of the ripples that flashed and twinkled
And laughed as they struck the strand?

As bells on the reins of the fairies ring
The ripples that kissed them rang,
The light from the sundawn sprang,
And the sweetest of songs that the world may sing
Was theirs when the full sea sang.

Now no light is in heaven; and now
Not a note of the sea-wind's tune
Rings hither: the bleak sky's boon
Grants hardly sight of a grey sun's brow—
A sun more sad than the moon.

More sad than a moon that clouds beleaguer
And storm is a scourge to smite,
The sick sun's shadowlike light
Grows faint as the clouds and the waves wax eager,
And withers away from sight.

The day's heart cowers, and the night's heart quickens :
Full fain would the day be dead
And the stark night reign in his stead :
The sea falls dumb as the sea-fog thickens
And the sunset dies for dread.

Outside of the range of time, whose breath
Is keen as the manslayer's knife
And his peace but a truce for strife,
Who knows if haply the shadow of death
May be not the light of life ?

For the storm and the rain and the darkness borrow
But an hour from the suns to be,
But a strange swift passage, that we
May rejoice, who have mourned not to-day, to-morrow,
In the sun and the wind and the sea.

BY THE WAYSIDE

Summer's face was rosiest, skies and woods were mellow,
Earth had heaven to friend, and heaven had earth to fellow,
When we met where wooded hills and meadows meet.
Autumn's face is pale, and all her late leaves yellow,
Now that here again we greet.

Wan with years whereof this eightieth nears December,
Fair and bright with love, the kind old face I know
Shines above the sweet small twain whose eyes remember
Heaven, and fill with April's light this pale November,
Though the dark year's glass run low.

Like a rose whose joy of life her silence utters
When the birds are loud, and low the lulled wind mutters,
Grave and silent shines the boy nigh three years old.
Wise and sweet his smile, that falters not nor flutters.
Glows, and turns the gloom to gold.

Like the new-born sun's that strikes the dark and
slays it,
So that even for love of light it smiles and dies,
Laughs the boy's blithe face whose fair fourth year
arrays it
All with light of life and mirth that stirs and sways it
And fulfils the deep wide eyes.

Wide and warm with glowing laughter's exultation,
Full of welcome, full of sunbright jubilation,
Flash my taller friend's quick eyebeams, charged
with glee ;
But with softer still and sweeter salutation
Shine my smaller friend's on me.

Little arms flung round my bending neck, that yoke it
Fast in tender bondage, draw my face down too
Toward the flower-soft face whose dumb deep smiles
invoke it ;
Dumb, but love can read the radiant eyes that
woke it,
Blue as June's mid heaven is blue.

How may men find refuge, how should hearts be
shielded,
From the weapons thus by little children wielded,
When they lift such eyes as light this lustrous face—
Eyes that woke love sleeping unawares, and yielded
Love for love, a gift of grace,

Grace beyond man's merit, love that laughs, forgiving
Even the sin of being no more a child, nor worth
Trust and love that lavish gifts above man's giving,
Touch or glance of eyes and lips the sweetest living
Fair as heaven and kind as earth ?

NIGHT

I

FROM THE ITALIAN OF GIOVANNI STROZZI

NIGHT, whom in shape so sweet thou here may'st see
Sleeping, was by an Angel sculptured thus
In marble, and since she sleeps hath life like us :
Thou doubt'st? Awake her : she will speak to thee.

II

FROM THE ITALIAN OF MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI

Sleep likes me well, and better yet to know
I am but stone. While shame and grief must be,
Good hap is mine, to feel not, nor to see :
Take heed, then, lest thou wake me : ah, speak low.

IN TIME OF MOURNING

"RETURN," we dare not as we fain
Would cry from hearts that yearn:
Love dares not bid our dead again
Return.

O hearts that strain and burn
As fires fast fettered burn and strain!
Bow down, lie still, and learn.

The heart that healed all hearts of pain
No funeral rites inurn:
Its echoes, while the stars remain,
Return.

May 1885.

THE INTERPRETERS

I

Days dawn on us that make amends for many
Sometimes,
When heaven and earth seem sweeter even than any
Man's rhymes.

Light had not all been quenched in France, or quelled
In Greece,
Had Homer sung not, or had Hugo held
His peace.

Had Sappho's self not left her word thus long
For token,
The sea round Lesbos yet in waves of song
Had spoken.

II

And yet these days of subtler air and finer
Delight,
When lovelier looks the darkness, and diviner
The light—

The gift they give of all these golden hours,
Whose urn
Pours forth reverberate rays or shadowing showers
In turn—

Clouds, beams, and winds that make the live day's track
Seem living—
What were they did no spirit give them back
Thanksgiving?

III

Dead air, dead fire, dead shapes and shadows, telling
Time nought;
Man gives them sense and soul by song, and dwelling
In thought.

In human thought their being endures, their power
Abides:
Else were their life a thing that each light hour
Derides.

The years live, work, sigh, smile, and die, with all
They cherish;
The soul endures, though dreams that fed it fall
And perish.

IV

In human thought have all things habitation;
Our days
Laugh, lower, and lighten past, and find no station
That stays.

But thought and faith are mightier things than time
Can wrong,
Made splendid once with speech, or made sublime
By song.

Remembrance, though the tide of change that rolls
Wax hoary,
Gives earth and heaven, for song's sake and the soul's,
Their glory.

July 16, 1885.

THE RECALL

RETURN, they cry, ere yet your day
  Set, and the sky grow stern :
Return, strayed souls, while yet ye may
  Return.

  But heavens beyond us yearn ;
Yea, heights of heaven above the sway
  Of stars that eyes discern.

The soul whose wings from shoreward stray
  Makes toward her viewless bourne
Though trustless faith and unfaith say,
  Return.

BY TWILIGHT

If we dream that desire of the distance above us
Should be fettered by fear of the shadows that seem,
If we wake, to be nought, but to hate or to love us
If we dream,

Night sinks on the soul, and the stars as they gleam
Speak menace or mourning, with tongues to reprove us
That we deemed of them better than terror may deem.

But if hope may not lure us, if fear may not move us,
Thought lightens the darkness wherein the supreme
Pure presence of death shall assure us, and prove us
If we dream.

A BABY'S EPITAPH

April made me : winter laid me here away asleep.
Bright as Maytime was my daytime ; night is soft and deep :
Though the morrow bring forth sorrow, well are ye that weep.

Ye that held me dear beheld me not a twelvemonth long :
All the while ye saw me smile, ye knew not whence the song
Came that made me smile, and laid me here, and wrought you wrong.

Angels, calling from your brawling world one undefiled,
Homeward bade me, and forbade me here to rest beguiled :
Here I sleep not : pass, and weep not here upon your child.

ON THE DEATH OF SIR HENRY TAYLOR

Fourscore and five times has the gradual year
  Risen and fulfilled its days of youth and eld
  Since first the child's eyes opening first beheld
Light, who now leaves behind to help us here
Light shed from song as starlight from a sphere
  Serene as summer ; song whose charm compelled
  The sovereign soul made flesh in Artevelde
To stand august before us and austere,
Half sad with mortal knowledge, all sublime
With trust that takes no taint from change or time,
Trust in man's might of manhood. Strong and sage,
  Clothed round with reverence of remembering
    hearts,
He, twin-born with our nigh departing age,
  Into the light of peace and fame departs.

IN MEMORY OF JOHN WILLIAM INCHBOLD

Farewell : how should not such as thou fare well,
Though we fare ill that love thee, and that live,
And know, whate'er the days wherein we dwell
May give us, thee again they will not give ?

Peace, rest, and sleep are all we know of death,
And all we dream of comfort : yet for thee,
Whose breath of life was bright and strenuous breath,
We think the change is other than we see.

The seal of sleep set on thine eyes to-day
Surely can seal not up the keen swift light
That lit them once for ever. Night can slay
None save the children of the womb of night.

The fire that burns up dawn to bring forth noon
Was father of thy spirit : how shouldst thou
Die as they die for whom the sun and moon
Are silent ? Thee the darkness holds not now :

Them, while they looked upon the light, and deemed
That life was theirs for living in the sun,
The darkness held in bondage : and they dreamed,
Who knew not that such life as theirs was none.

To thee the sun spake, and the morning sang
Notes deep and clear as life or heaven : the sea
That sounds for them but wild waste music rang
Notes that were lost not when they rang for thee.

The mountains clothed with light and night and change,
The lakes alive with wind and cloud and sun,
Made answer, by constraint sublime and strange,
To the ardent hand that bade thy will be done.

We may not bid the mountains mourn, the sea
That lived and lightened from thine hand again
Moan, as of old would men that mourned as we
A man beloved, a man elect of men,

A man that loved them. Vain, divine and vain,
The dream that touched with thoughts or tears of ours
The spirit of sense that lives in sun and rain,
Sings out in birds, and breathes and fades in flowers.

Not for our joy they live, and for our grief
They die not. Though thine eye be closed, thine hand
Powerless as mine to paint them, not a leaf
In English woods or glades of Switzerland

Falls earlier now, fades faster. All our love
Moves not our mother's changeless heart, who gives
A little light to eyes and stars above,
A little life to each man's heart that lives.

A little life to heaven and earth and sea,
To stars and souls revealed of night and day,
And change, the one thing changeless : yet shall she
Cease too, perchance, and perish. Who shall say ?

Our mother Nature, dark and sweet as sleep,
And strange as life and strong as death, holds fast,
Even as she holds our hearts alive, the deep
Dumb secret of her first-born births and last.

But this, we know, shall cease not till the strife
Of nights and days and fears and hopes find end ;
This, through the brief eternities of life,
Endures, and calls from death a living friend ;

The love made strong with knowledge, whence confirmed
The whole soul takes assurance, and the past
(So by time's measure, not by memory's, termed)
Lives present life, and mingles first with last.

I, now long since thy guest of many days,
Who found thy hearth a brother's, and with thee
Tracked in and out the lines of rolling bays
And banks and gulfs and reaches of the sea—

Deep dens wherein the wrestling water sobs
And pants with restless pain of refluent breath
Till all the sunless hollow sounds and throbs
With ebb and flow of eddies dark as death—

I know not what more glorious world, what waves
More bright with life,—if brighter aught may live
Than those that filled and fled their tidal caves—
May now give back the love thou hast to give.

Tintagel, and the long Trebarwith sand,
Lone Camelford, and Boscastle divine
With dower of southern blossom, bright and bland
Above the roar of granite-baffled brine,

Shall hear no more by joyous night or day
From downs or causeways good to rove and ride
Or feet of ours or horse-hoofs urge their way
That sped us here and there by tower and tide.

The headlands and the hollows and the waves,
For all our love, forget us: where I am
Thou art not: deeper sleeps the shadow on graves
Than in the sunless gulf that once we swam.

Thou hast swum too soon the sea of death: for us
Too soon, but if truth bless love's blind belief
Faith, born of hope and memory, says not thus:
And joy for thee for me should mean not grief.

And joy for thee, if ever soul of man
Found joy in change and life of ampler birth
Than here pens in the spirit for a span,
Must be the life that doubt calls death on earth.

For if, beyond the shadow and the sleep,
A place there be for souls without a stain,
Where peace is perfect, and delight more deep
Than seas or skies that change and shine again,

There none of all unsullied souls that live
May hold a surer station: none may lend
More light to hope's or memory's lamp, nor give
More joy than thine to those that called thee friend.

Yea, joy from sorrow's barren womb is born
When faith begets on grief the godlike child :
As midnight yearns with starry sense of morn
In Arctic summers, though the sea wax wild,

So love, whose name is memory, thrills at heart,
Remembering and rejoicing in thee, now
Alive where love may dream not what thou art
But knows that higher than hope or love art thou.

"Whatever heaven, if heaven at all may be,
Await the sacred souls of good men dead,
There, now we mourn who loved him here, is he."
So, sweet and stern of speech, the Roman said,

Erect in grief, in trust erect, and gave
His deathless dead a deathless life even here
Where day bears down on day as wave on wave
And not man's smile fades faster than his tear.

Albeit this gift be given not me to give,
Nor power be mine to break time's silent spell,
Not less shall love that dies not while I live
Bid thee, beloved in life and death, farewell.

NEW YEAR'S DAY

New Year, be good to England. Bid her name
Shine sunlike as of old on all the sea:
Make strong her soul: set all her spirit free:
Bind fast her homeborn foes with links of shame
More strong than iron and more keen than flame:
Seal up their lips for shame's sake: so shall she
Who was the light that lightened freedom be,
For all false tongues, in all men's eyes the same.

O last-born child of Time, earth's eldest lord,
God undiscrowned of godhead, who for man
Begets all good and evil things that live,
Do thou, his new-begotten son, implored
Of hearts that hope and fear not, make thy span
Bright with such light as history bids thee give

Jan. 1, 1889.

TO SIR RICHARD F. BURTON

(ON HIS TRANSLATION OF "THE ARABIAN NIGHTS")

WESTWARD the sun sinks, grave and glad ; but far
  Eastward, with laughter and tempestuous tears,
  Cloud, rain, and splendour as of orient spears,
Keen as the sea's thrill toward a kindling star,
The sundawn breaks the barren twilight's bar
  And fires the mist and slays it. Years on years
  Vanish, but he that hearkens eastward hears
Bright music from the world where shadows are.

Where shadows are not shadows. Hand in hand
A man's word bids them rise and smile and stand
  And triumph. All that glorious orient glows
Defiant of the dusk. Our twilight land
  Trembles ; but all the heaven is all one rose,
  Whence laughing love dissolves her frosts and snows.

NELL GWYN

Sweet heart, that no taint of the throne or the stage
Could touch with unclean transformation, or alter
To the likeness of courtiers whose consciences falter
At the smile or the frown, at the mirth or the rage,
Of a master whom chance could inflame or assuage,
Our Lady of Laughter, invoked in no psalter,
Adored of no faithful that cringe and that palter,
Praise be with thee yet from a hag-ridden age.

Our Lady of Pity thou wast : and to thee
All England, whose sons are the sons of the sea,
Gives thanks, and will hear not if history snarls
When the name of the friend of her sailors is spoken ;
And thy lover she cannot but love—by the token
That thy name was the last on the lips of King Charles.

CALIBAN ON ARIEL

" His backward voice is to utter foul speeches and to detract "

The tongue is loosed of that most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness. Listen:
" Lo,
The real god of song, Lord Stephano,
That's a brave god, if ever god were brave,
And bears celestial liquor: but," the knave
(A most ridiculous monster) howls, " we know
From Ariel's lips what springs of poison flow,
The chicken-heart blasphemer! Hear him rave!"

Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself
Upon thy wicked dam, the witch whose name
Is darkness, and the sun her eyes' offence,
Though hell's hot sewerage breed no loathlier elf,
Men cry not shame upon thee, seeing thy shame
So perfect: they but bid thee—" Hag-seed,
hence!"

THE WEARY WEDDING

O DAUGHTER, why do ye laugh and weep,
One with another?
For woe to wake and for will to sleep,
Mother, my mother.

But weep ye winna the day ye wed,
One with another.
For tears are dry when the springs are dead,
Mother, my mother.

Too long have your tears run down like rain,
One with another.
For a long love lost and a sweet love slain,
Mother, my mother.

Too long have your tears dripped down like dew,
One with another.
For a knight that my sire and my brethren slew,
Mother, my mother.

Let past things perish and dead griefs lie,
One with another.
O fain would I weep not, and fain would I die,
Mother, my mother.

Fair gifts we give ye, to laugh and live,
One with another.
But sair and strange are the gifts I give,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give for your father's love?
One with another.
Fruits full few and thorns enough,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give for your mother's sake?
One with another.
Tears to brew and tares to bake,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your sister Jean?
One with another.
A bier to build and a babe to wean,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your sister Nell?
One with another.
The end of life and beginning of heil,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your sister Kate?
One with another.
Earth's door and hell's gate,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your brother Will?
One with another.
Life's grief and world's ill,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your brother Hugh?
One with another.
A bed of turf to turn into,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your brother John?
One with another.
The dust of death to feed upon,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your bauld bridegroom?
One with another.
A barren bed and an empty room,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your bridegroom's friend?
One with another.
A weary foot to the weary end,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your blithe bridesmaid?
One with another.
Grief to sew and sorrow to braid,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye drink the day ye're wed?
One with another.
But ae drink of the wan well-head,
Mother, my mother.

And whatten a water is that to draw?
One with another.
We maun draw thereof a', we maun drink thereof a',
Mother, my mother.

And what shall ye pu' where the well rins deep?
One with another.
Green herb of death, fine flower of sleep,
Mother, my mother.

Are there ony fishes that swim therein?
One with another.
The white fish grace, and the red fish sin,
Mother, my mother.

Are there ony birds that sing thereby?
One with another.
O when they come thither they sing till they die,
Mother, my mother.

Is there ony draw-bucket to that well-head?
One with another.
There's a wee well-bucket hangs low by a thread,
Mother, my mother.

And whatten a thread is that to spin?
One with another.
It's green for grace, and it's black for sin,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye strew on your bride-chamber floor?
One with another.
But one strewing and no more,
Mother, my mother.

And whatten a strewing shall that one be?
One with another.
The dust of earth and sand of the sea,
Mother my mother.

And what will ye take to build your bed?
One with another.
Sighing and shame and the bones of the dead,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye wear for your wedding gown?
One with another.
Grass for the green and dust for the brown
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye wear for your wedding lace?
One with another.
A heavy heart and a hidden face,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye wear for a wreath to your head?
One with another.
Ash for the white and blood for the red,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye wear for your wedding ring?
One with another.
A weary thought for a weary thing,
Mother, my mother.

And what shall the chimes and the bell-ropes play?
One with another.
A weary tune on a weary day,
Mother, my mother.

And what shall be sung for your wedding song?
One with another.
A weary word of a weary wrong,
Mother, my mother.

The world's way with me runs back,
One with another,
Wedded in white and buried in black,
Mother, my mother.

The world's day and the world's night,
One with another,
Wedded in black and buried in white,
Mother, my mother.

The world's bliss and the world's teen,
One with another,
It's red for white and it's black for green,
Mother, my mother.

The world's will and the world's way,
One with another,
It's sighing for night and crying for day,
Mother, my mother.

The world's good and the world's worth,
One with another,
It's earth to flesh and it's flesh to earth,
Mother, my mother.

* * * * * *

When she came out at the kirkyard gate,
(One with another)
The bridegroom's mother was there in wait.
(Mother, my mother.)

O mother, where is my great green bed,
(One with another)
Silk at the foot and gold at the head,
Mother, my mother?

Yea, it is ready, the silk and the gold,
One with another.
But line it well that I lie not cold,
Mother, my mother.

She laid her cheek to the velvet and vair,
One with another;
She laid her arms up under her hair.
(Mother, my mother.)

Her gold hair fell through her arms fu' low,
One with another:
Lord God, bring me out of woe!
(Mother, my mother.)

Her gold hair fell in the gay reeds green,
One with another:
Lord God, bring me out of teen!
(Mother, my mother.)

* * * * * *

O mother, where is my lady gone?
(One with another.)
In the bride-chamber she makes sore moan:
(Mother, my mother.)

Her hair falls over the velvet and vair,
(One with another)
Her great soft tears fall over her hair.
(Mother, my mother.)

When he came into the bride's chamber,
(One with another)
Her hands were like pale yellow amber.
(Mother, my mother.)

Her tears made specks in the velvet and vair,
(One with another)
The seeds of the reeds made specks in her hair.
(Mother, my mother.)

He kissed her under the gold on her head;
(One with another)
The lids of her eyes were like cold lead.
(Mother, my mother.)

He kissed her under the fall of her chin;
(One with another)
There was right little blood therein.
(Mother, my mother.)

He kissed her under her shoulder sweet;
(One with another)
Her throat was weak, with little heat.
(Mother, my mother.)

He kissed her down by her breast-flowers red,
One with another;
They were like river-flowers dead.
(Mother, my mother.)

What ails you now o' your weeping, wife?
(One with another.)
It ails me sair o' my very life.
(Mother, my mother.)

What ails you now o' your weary ways?
(One with another.)
It ails me sair o' my long life-days.
(Mother, my mother.)

Nay, ye are young, ye are over fair.
(One with another.)
Though I be young, what needs ye care?
(Mother, my mother.)

Nay, ye are fair, ye are over sweet.
(One with another.)
Though I be fair, what needs ye greet?
(Mother, my mother.)

Nay, ye are mine while I hold my life.
(One with another.)
O fool, will ye marry the worm for a wife?
(Mother, my mother.)

Nay, ye are mine while I have my breath.
(One with another.)
O fool, will ye marry the dust of death?
(Mother, my mother.)

Yea, ye are mine, we are handfast wed,
One with another.
Nay, I am no man's; nay, I am dead,
Mother, my mother.

THE WINDS

O WEARY fa' the east wind,
And weary fa' the west :
And gin I were under the wan waves wide
I wot weel wad I rest.

O weary fa' the north wind,
And weary fa' the south :
The sea went ower my good lord's head
Or ever he kissed my mouth.

Weary fa' the windward rocks,
And weary fa' the lee :
They might hae sunken sevenscore ships,
And let my love's gang free.

And weary fa' ye, mariners a',
And weary fa' the sea :
It might hae taken an hundred men,
And let my ae love be.

A LYKE-WAKE SONG

Fair of face, full of pride,
Sit ye down by a dead man's side.

Ye sang songs a' the day:
Sit down at night in the red worm's way.

Proud ye were a' day long:
Ye'll be but lean at evensong.

Ye had gowd kells on your hair:
Nae man kens what ye were.

Ye set scorn by the silken stuff:
Now the grave is clean enough.

Ye set scorn by the rubis ring:
Now the worm is a saft sweet thing

Fine gold and blithe fair face,
Ye are come to a grimly place.

Gold hair and glad grey een,
Nae man kens if ye have been.

A REIVER'S NECK-VERSE

Some die singing, and some die swinging,
And weel mot a' they be :
Some die playing, and some die praying,
And I wot sae winna we, my dear,
And I wot sae winna we.

Some die sailing, and some die wailing,
And some die fair and free :
Some die flyting, and some die fighting,
But I for a fause love's fee, my dear,
But I for a fause love's fee.

Some die laughing, and some die quaffing,
And some die high on tree :
Some die spinning, and some die sinning,
But faggot and fire for ye, my dear,
Faggot and fire for ye.

Some die weeping, and some die sleeping,
And some die under sea :
Some die ganging, and some die hanging,
And a twine of a tow for me, my dear,
A twine of a tow for me.

THE WITCH-MOTHER

"O WHERE will ye gang to and where will ye sleep,
Against the night begins?"
"My bed is made wi' cauld sorrows,
My sheets are lined wi' sins.

"And a sair grief sitting at my foot,
And a sair grief at my head;
And dule to lay me my laigh pillows,
And teen till I be dead.

"And the rain is sair upon my face,
And sair upon my hair;
And the wind upon my weary mouth,
That never may man kiss mair.

"And the snow upon my heavy lips,
That never shall drink nor eat;
And shame to cledding, and woe to wedding,
And pain to drink and meat.

"But woe be to my bairns' father,
And ever ill fare he:
He has tane a braw bride hame to him,
Cast out my bairns and me."

"And what shall they have to their marriage meat
This day they twain are wed?"
"Meat of strong crying, salt of sad sighing,
And God restore the dead."

"And what shall they have to their wedding wine
This day they twain are wed?"
"Wine of weeping, and draughts of sleeping,
And God raise up the dead."

She's tane her to the wild woodside,
Between the flood and fell:
She's sought a rede against her need
Of the fiend that bides in hell.

She's tane her to the wan burnside,
She's wrought wi' sang and spell:
She's plighted her soul for doom and dole
To the fiend that bides in hell.

She's set her young son to her breast,
Her auld son to her knee:
Says, "Weel for you the night, bairnies,
And weel the morn for me."

She looked fu' lang in their een, sighing,
And sair and sair grat she:
She has slain her young son at her breast,
Her auld son at her knee.

She's sodden their flesh wi' saft water,
She's mixed their blood with wine:
She's tane her to the braw bride-house,
Where a' were boun' to dine.

She poured the red wine in his cup,
And his een grew fain to greet :
She set the baked meats at his hand,
And bade him drink and eat.

Says, " Eat your fill of your flesh, my lord,
And drink your fill of your wine ;
For a' thing's yours and only yours
That has been yours and mine."

Says, " Drink your fill of your wine, my lord,
And eat your fill of your bread :
I would they were quick in my body again,
Or I that bare them dead."

He struck her head frae her fair body,
And dead for grief he fell :
And there were twae mair sangs in heaven,
And twae mair sauls in hell.

THE BRIDE'S TRAGEDY

"The wind wears roun', the day wears doun,
The moon is grisly grey;
There's nae man rides by the mirk muirsides,
Nor down the dark Tyne's way."
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"And winna ye watch the night wi' me,
And winna ye wake the morn?
Foul shame it were that your ae mither
Should brook her ae son's scorn."
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"O mither, I may not sleep nor stay,
My weird is ill to dree;
For a fause faint lord of the south seaboard
Wad win my bride of me."
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"The winds are strang, and the nights are lang,
And the ways are sair to ride:
And I maun gang to wreak my wrang,
And ye maun bide and bide."
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"Gin I maun bide and bide, Willie,
I wot my weird is sair:
Weel may ye get ye a light love yet,
But never a mither mair."
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"O gin the morrow be great wi' sorrow,
The wyte be yours of a':
But though ye slay me that haud and stay me,
The weird ye will maun fa'."
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

When cocks were crawing and day was dawing,
He's boun' him forth to ride:
And the ae first may he's met that day
Was fause Earl Robert's bride.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

O blithe and braw were the bride-folk a',
But sad and saft rade she;
And sad as doom was her fause bridegroom,
But fair and fain was he.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"And winna ye bide, sae saft ye ride,
And winna ye speak wi' me?
For mony's the word and the kindly word
I have spoken aft wi' thee."
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"My lamp was lit yestreen, Willie,
My window-gate was wide:
But ye camena nigh me till day came by me
And made me not your bride."
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

He's set his hand to her bridle-rein,
He's turned her horse away:
And the cry was sair, and the wrath was mair,
And fast and fain rode they.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

But when they came by Chollerford,
I wot the ways were fell;
For broad and brown the spate swang down,
And the lift was mirk as hell.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"And will ye ride yon fell water,
Or will ye bide for fear?
Nae scathe ye'll win o' your father s kin,
Though they should slay me here."
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"I had liefer ride yon fell water,
Though strange it be to ride,
Than I wad stand on the fair green strand
And thou be slain beside."
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"I had liefer swim yon wild water,
Though sair it be to bide,
Than I wad stand at a strange man's hand,
To be a strange man's bride."
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

"I had liefer drink yon dark water,
Wi' the stanes to make my bed,
And the faem to hide me, and thou beside me,
Than I wad see thee dead."
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

He's kissed her twice, he's kissed her thrice,
On cheek and lip and chin:
He's wound her rein to his hand again,
And lightly they leapt in.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

Their hearts were high to live or die,
Their steeds were stark of limb:
But the stream was starker, the spate was darker,
Than man might live and swim.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

The first ae step they strode therein,
It smote them foot and knee:
But ere they wan to the mid water
The spate was as the sea.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

But when they wan to the mid water,
It smote them hand and head :
And nae man knows but the wave that flows
Where they lie drowned and dead.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

A JACOBITE'S FAREWELL

1716

THERE'S nae mair lands to tyne, my dear,
And nae mair lives to gie :
Though a man think sair to live nae mair,
There's but one day to die.

For a' things come and a' days gane,
What needs ye rend your hair ?
But kiss me till the morn's morrow,
Then I'll kiss ye nae mair.

O lands are lost and life's losing,
And what were they to gie ?
Fu' mony a man gives all he can,
But nae man else gives ye.

Our king wons ower the sea's water,
And I in prison sair :
But I'll win out the morn's morrow,
And ye'll see me nae mair.

A JACOBITE'S EXILE

1746

The weary day rins down and dies,
The weary night wears through:
And never an hour is fair wi' flower,
And never a flower wi' dew.

I would the day were night for me,
I would the night were day:
For then would I stand in my ain fair land
As now in dreams I may.

O lordly flow the Loire and Seine,
And loud the dark Durance:
But bonnier shine the braes of Tyne
Than a' the fields of France;
And the waves of Till that speak sae still
Gleam goodlier where they glance.

O weel were they that fell fighting
On dark Drumossie's day:
They keep their hame ayont the faem,
And we die far away.

O sound they sleep, and saft, and deep,
But night and day wake we;
And ever between the sea-banks green
Sounds loud the sundering sea.

And ill we sleep, sae sair we weep,
But sweet and fast sleep they;
And the mool that haps them roun' and laps them
Is e'en their country's clay;
But the land we tread that are not dead
Is strange as night by day.

Strange as night in a strange man's sight,
Though fair as dawn it be:
For what is here that a stranger's cheer
Should yet wax blithe to see?

The hills stand steep, the dells lie deep,
The fields are green and gold:
The hill-streams sing, and the hill-sides ring,
As ours at home of old.

But hills and flowers are nane of ours,
And ours are oversea:
And the kind strange land whereon we stand,
It wotsna what were we
Or ever we came, wi' scathe and shame,
To try what end might be.

Scathe, and shame, and a waefu' name,
And a weary time and strange,
Have they that seeing a weird for dreeing
Can die, and cannot change.

Shame and scorn may we thole that mourn,
Though sair be they to dree:
But ill may we bide the thoughts we hide,
Mair keen than wind and sea.

Ill may we thole the night's watches,
And ill the weary day:
And the dreams that keep the gates of sleep,
A waefu' gift gie they;
For the sangs they sing us, the sights they bring us,
The morn blaws all away.

On Aikenshaw the sun blinks braw,
The burn rins blithe and fain:
There's nought wi' me I wadna gie
To look thereon again.

On Keilder-side the wind blaws wide;
There sounds nae hunting-horn
That rings sae sweet as the winds that beat
Round banks where Tyne is born.

The Wansbeck sings with all her springs,
The bents and braes give ear;
But the wood that rings wi' the sang she sings
I may not see nor hear;
For far and far thae blithe burns are,
And strange is a' thing near.

The light there lightens, the day there brightens,
The loud wind there lives free:
Nae light comes nigh me or wind blaws by me
That I wad hear or see.

But O gin I were there again,
  Afar ayont the faem,
Cauld and dead in the sweet saft bed
  That haps my sires at hame !

We'll see nae mair the sea-banks fair,
  And the sweet grey gleaming sky,
And the lordly strand of Northumberland,
  And the goodly towers thereby :
And none shall know but the winds that blow
  The graves wherein we lie.

THE TYNESIDE WIDOW

THERE's mony a man loves land and life,
Loves life and land and fee ;
And mony a man loves fair women,
But never a man loves me, my love,
But never a man loves me.

O weel and weel for a' lovers,
I wot weel may they be ;
And weel and weel for a' fair maidens,
But aye mair woe for me, my love,
But aye mair woe for me.

O weel be wi' you, ye sma' flowers,
Ye flowers and every tree ;
And weel be wi' you, a' birdies,
But teen and tears wi' me, my love,
But teen and tears wi' me.

O weel be yours, my three brethren,
And ever weel be ye ;
Wi' deeds for doing and loves for wooing,
But never a love for me, my love,
But never a love for me.

And weel be yours, my seven sisters,
And good love-days to see,
And long life-days and true lovers,
But never a day for me, my love,
But never a day for me.

Good times wi' you, ye bauld riders,
By the hieland and the lee;
And by the leeland and by the hieland
It's weary times wi' me, my love,
It's weary times wi' me.

Good days wi' you, ye good sailors,
Sail in and out the sea;
And by the beaches and by the reaches
It's heavy days wi' me, my love,
It's heavy days wi' me.

I had his kiss upon my mouth,
His bairn upon my knee;
I would my soul and body were twain,
And the bairn and the kiss wi' me, my love,
And the bairn and the kiss wi' me.

The bairn down in the mools, my dear,
O saft and saft lies she;
I would the mools were ower my head,
And the young bairn fast wi' me, my love,
And the young bairn fast wi' me.

The father under the faem, my dear,
O sound and sound sleeps he;
I would the faem were ower my face,
And the father lay by me, my love,
And the father lay by me.

I would the faem were ower my face,
Or the mools on my ee-bree ;
And waking-time with a' lovers,
But sleeping-time wi' me, my love,
But sleeping-time wi' me.

I would the mools were meat in my mouth,
The saut faem in my ee ;
And the land-worm and the water-worm
To feed fu' sweet on me, my love,
To feed fu' sweet on me.

My life is sealed with a seal of love,
And locked with love for a key ;
And I lie wrang and I wake lang,
But ye tak' nae thought for me, my love,
But ye tak' nae thought for me.

We were weel fain of love, my dear,
O fain and fain were we ;
It was weel with a' the weary world,
But O, sae weel wi' me, my love,
But O, sae weel wi' me.

We were nane ower mony to sleep, my dear,
I wot we were but three ;
And never a bed in the weary world
For my bairn and my dear and me, my love,
For my bairn and my dear and me.

DEDICATION

THE years are many, the changes more,
Since wind and sun on the wild sweet shore
  Where Joyous Gard stands stark by the sea
With face as bright as in years of yore

Shone, swept, and sounded, and laughed for glee
More deep than a man's or a child's may be,
  On a day when summer was wild and glad,
And the guests of the wind and the sun were we.

The light that lightens from seasons clad
With darkness now, is it glad or sad?
  Not sad but glad should it shine, meseems,
On eyes yet fain of the joy they had.

For joy was there with us; joy that gleams
And murmurs yet in the world of dreams
  Where thought holds fast, as a constant warder,
The days when I rode by moors and streams,

Reining my rhymes into buoyant order
Through honied leagues of the northland border.
  Though thought or memory fade, and prove
A faithless keeper, a thriftless hoarder,

One landmark never can change remove,
One sign can the years efface not. Love,
More strong than death or than doubt may be,
Treads down their strengths, and abides above.

Yea, change and death are his servants: we,
Whom love of the dead links fast, though free,
May smile as they that beheld the dove
Bear home her signal across the sea.

SONGS OF THE SPRINGTIDES

DEDICATION

TO EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY

A SEA-MEW on a sea-king's wrist alighting,
As the north sea-wind caught and strained and curled
The raven-figured flag that led men fighting
From field to green field of the water-world,
Might find such brief high favour at his hand
For wings imbrued with brine, with foam impearled,
As these my songs require at yours on land,
That durst not save for love's free sake require,
Being lightly born between the foam and sand,
But reared by hope and memory and desire
Of lives that were and life that is to be,
Even such as filled his heavenlier song with fire
Whose very voice, that sang to set man free,
Was in your ears as ever in ours his lyre,
Once, ere the flame received him from the sea

THALASSIUS

Upon the flowery forefront of the year,
One wandering by the grey-green April sea
Found on a reach of shingle and shallower sand
Inlaid with starrier glimmering jewellery
Left for the sun's love and the light wind's cheer
Along the foam-flowered strand
Breeze-brightened, something nearer sea than land
Though the last shoreward blossom-fringe was near,
A babe asleep with flower-soft face that gleamed
To sun and seaward as it laughed and dreamed,
Too sure of either love for either's fear,
Albeit so birdlike slight and light, it seemed
Nor man nor mortal child of man, but fair
As even its twin-born tenderer spray-flowers were,
That the wind scatters like an Oread's hair.

For when July strewed fire on earth and sea
The last time ere that year,
Out of the flame of morn Cymothoe
Beheld one brighter than the sunbright sphere
Move toward her from its fieriest heart, whence trod
The live sun's very God,
Across the foam-bright water-ways that are
As heavenlier heavens with star for answering star,
And on her eyes and hair and maiden mouth
Felt a kiss falling fierier than the South

And heard above afar
A noise of songs and wind-enamoured wings
And lutes and lyres of milder and mightier strings,
And round the resonant radiance of his car
Where depth is one with height,
Light heard as music, music seen as light.
And with that second moondawn of the spring's
That fosters the first rose,
A sun-child whiter than the sunlit snows
Was born out of the world of sunless things
That round the round earth flows and ebbs and flows.

But he that found the sea-flower by the sea
And took to foster like a graft of earth
Was born of man's most highest and heavenliest birth,
Free-born as winds and stars and waves are free;
A warrior grey with glories more than years,
Though more of years than change the quick to dead
Had rained their light and darkness on his head;
A singer that in time's and memory's ears
Should leave such words to sing as all his peers
Might praise with hallowing heat of rapturous tears
Till all the days of human flight were fled.
And at his knees his fosterling was fed
Not with man's wine and bread
Nor mortal mother-milk of hopes and fears,
But food of deep memorial days long sped;
For bread with wisdom and with song for wine
Clear as the full calm's emerald hyaline.
And from his grave glad lips the boy would gather
Fine honey of song-notes goldener than gold,
More sweet than bees make of the breathing heather,
That he, as glad and bold,
Might drink as they, and keep his spirit from cold.
And the boy loved his laurel-laden hair

As his own father's risen on the eastern air,
And that less white brow-binding bayleaf bloom
More than all flowers his father's eyes relume ;
And those high songs he heard,
More than all notes of any landward bird,
More than all sounds less free
Than the wind's quiring to the choral sea.

High things the high song taught him ; how the breath
Too frail for life may be more strong than death ;
And this poor flash of sense in life, that gleams
As a ghost's glory in dreams,
More stabile than the world's own heart's root seems,
By that strong faith of lordliest love which gives
To death's own sightless-seeming eyes a light
Clearer, to death's bare bones a verier might,
Than shines or strikes from any man that lives.
How he that loves life overmuch shall die
The dog's death, utterly :
And he that much less loves it than he hates
All wrongdoing that is done
Anywhere always underneath the sun
Shall live a mightier life than time's or fate's.
One fairer thing he shewed him, and in might
More strong than day and night
Whose strengths build up time's towering period :
Yea, one thing stronger and more high than God,
Which if man had not, then should God not be :
And that was Liberty.
And gladly should man die to gain, he said,
Freedom ; and gladlier, having lost, lie dead.
For man's earth was not, nor the sweet sea-waves
His, nor his own land, nor its very graves,
Except they bred not, bore not, hid not slaves :

But all of all that is,
Were one man free in body and soul, were his.

And the song softened, even as heaven by night
Softens, from sunnier down to starrier light,
And with its moonbright breath
Blessed life for death's sake, and for life's sake death.
Till as the moon's own beam and breath confuse
In one clear hueless haze of glimmering hues
The sea's line and the land's line and the sky's,
And light for love of darkness almost dies,
As darkness only lives for light's dear love,
Whose hands the web of night is woven of,
So in that heaven of wondrous words were life
And death brought out of strife ;
Yea, by that strong spell of serene increase
Brought out of strife to peace.

And the song lightened, as the wind at morn
Flashes, and even with lightning of the wind
Night's thick-spun web is thinned
And all its weft unwoven and overworn
Shrinks, as might love from scorn.
And as when wind and light on water and land
Leap as twin gods from heavenward hand in hand,
And with the sound and splendour of their leap
Strike darkness dead, and daunt the spirit of sleep,
And burn it up with fire ;
So with the light that lightened from the lyre
Was all the bright heat in the child's heart stirred
And blown with blasts of music into flame
Till even his sense became
Fire, as the sense that fires the singing bird
Whose song calls night by name.

And in the soul within the sense began
The manlike passion of a godlike man,
And in the sense within the soul again
Thoughts that make men of gods and gods of men.

For love the high song taught him: love that turns
God's heart toward man as man's to Godward; love
That life and death and life are fashioned of,
From the first breath that burns
Half kindled on the flowerlike yeanling's lip,
So light and faint that life seems like to slip,
To that yet weaklier drawn
When sunset dies of night's devouring dawn.
But the man dying not wholly as all men dies
If aught be left of his in live men's eyes
Out of the dawnless dark of death to rise;
If aught of deed or word
Be seen for all time or of all time heard.
Love, that though body and soul were overthrown
Should live for love's sake of itself alone,
Though spirit and flesh were one thing doomed and dead,
Not wholly annihilated.
Seeing even the hoariest ash-flake that the pyre
Drops, and forgets the thing was once afire
And gave its heart to feed the pile's full flame
Till its own heart its own heat overcame,
Outlives its own life, though by scarce a span,
As such men dying outlive themselves in man,
Outlive themselves for ever; if the heat
Outburn the heart that kindled it, the sweet
Outlast the flower whose soul it was, and flit
Forth of the body of it

Into some new shape of a strange perfume
More potent than its light live spirit of bloom,
How shall not something of that soul relive,
That only soul that had such gifts to give
As lighten something even of all men's doom
Even from the labouring womb
Even to the seal set on the unopening tomb?
And these the loving light of song and love
Shall wrap and lap round and impend above,
Imperishable; and all springs born illume
Their sleep with brighter thoughts than wake the dove
To music, when the hillside winds resume
The marriage-song of heather-flower and broom
And all the joy thereof.

And hate the song too taught him: hate of all
That brings or holds in thrall
Of spirit or flesh, free-born ere God began,
The holy body and sacred soul of man.
And wheresoever a curse was or a chain,
A throne for torment or a crown for bane
Rose, moulded out of poor men's molten pain,
There, said he, should man's heaviest hate be set
Inexorably, to faint not or forget
Till the last warmth bled forth of the last vein
In flesh that none should call a king's again,
Seeing wolves and dogs and birds that plague-strike air
Leave the last bone of all the carrion bare.

And hope the high song taught him: hope whose eyes
Can sound the seas unsoundable, the skies
Inaccessible of eyesight; that can see

What earth beholds not, hear what wind and sea
Hear not, and speak what all these crying in one
Can speak not to the sun.
For in her sovereign eyelight all things are
Clear as the closest seen and kindlier star
That marries morn and even and winter and spring
With one love's golden ring.
For she can see the days of man, the birth
Of good and death of evil things on earth
Inevitable and infinite, and sure
As present pain is, or herself is pure.
Yea, she can hear and see, beyond all things
That lighten from before Time's thunderous wings
Through the awful circle of wheel-winged periods,
The tempest of the twilight of all Gods :
And higher than all the circling course they ran
The sundawn of the spirit that was man.

And fear the song too taught him ; fear to be
Worthless the dear love of the wind and sea
That bred him fearless, like a sea-mew reared
In rocks of man's foot feared,
Where nought of wingless life may sing or shine.
Fear to wax worthless of that heaven he had
When all the life in all his limbs was glad
And all the drops in all his veins were wine
And all the pulses music ; when his heart,
Singing, bade heaven and wind and sea bear part
In one live song's reiterance, and they bore :
Fear to go crownless of the flower he wore
When the winds loved him and the waters knew,
The blithest life that clove their blithe life through
With living limbs exultant, or held strife
More amorous than all dalliance aye anew
With the bright breath and strength of their large life,

With all strong wrath of all sheer winds that blew,
All glories of all storms of the air that fell
Prone, ineluctable,
With roar from heaven of revel, and with hue
As of a heaven turned hell.
For when the red blast of their breath had made
All heaven aflush with light more dire than shade,
He felt it in his blood and eyes and hair
Burn as if all the fires of the earth and air
Had laid strong hold upon his flesh, and stung
The soul behind it as with serpent's tongue,
Forked like the loveliest lightnings : nor could bear
But hardly, half distraught with strong delight,
The joy that like a garment wrapped him round
And lapped him over and under
With raiment of great light
And rapture of great sound
At every loud leap earthward of the thunder
From heaven's most furthest bound :
So seemed all heaven in hearing and in sight,
Alive and mad with glory and angry joy,
That something of its marvellous mirth and might
Moved even to madness, fledged as even for flight,
The blood and spirit of one but mortal boy.

So, clothed with love and fear that love makes great,
And armed with hope and hate,
He set first foot upon the spring-flowered ways
That all feet pass and praise.
And one dim dawn between the winter and spring,
In the sharp harsh wind harrying heaven and earth
To put back April that had borne his birth
From sunward on her sunniest shower-struck wing,
With tears and laughter for the dew-dropt thing,

Slight as indeed a dew-drop, by the sea
One met him lovelier than all men may be,
God-featured, with god's eyes ; and in their might
Somewhat that drew men's own to mar their sight,
Even of all eyes drawn toward him : and his mouth
Was as the very rose of all men's youth,
One rose of all the rose-beds in the world :
But round his brows the curls were snakes that curled,
And like his tongue a serpent's ; and his voice
Speaks death, and bids rejoice.
Yet then he spake no word, seeming as dumb,
A dumb thing mild and hurtless ; nor at first
From his bowed eyes seemed any light to come,
Nor his meek lips for blood or tears to thirst :
But as one blind and mute in mild sweet wise
Pleading for pity of piteous lips and eyes,
He strayed with faint bare lily-lovely feet
Helpless, and flowerlike sweet :
Nor might man see, not having word hereof,
That this of all gods was the great god Love.

And seeing him lovely and like a little child
That wellnigh wept for wonder that it smiled
And was so feeble and fearful, with soft speech
The youth bespake him softly ; but there fell
From the sweet lips no sweet word audible
That ear or thought might reach :
No sound to make the dim cold silence glad,
No breath to thaw the hard harsh air with heat ;
Only the saddest smile of all things sweet,
Only the sweetest smile of all things sad.

And so they went together one green way
Till April dying made free the world for May ;

And on his guide suddenly Love's face turned,
And in his blind eyes burned
Hard light and heat of laughter ; and like flame
That opens in a mountain's ravening mouth
To blear and sear the sunlight from the south,
His mute mouth opened, and his first word came :
' Knowest thou me now by name ? '
And all his stature waxed immeasurable,
As of one shadowing heaven and lightening hell ;
And statelier stood he than a tower that stands
And darkens with its darkness far-off sands
Whereon the sky leans red ;
And with a voice that stilled the winds he said :
' I am he that was thy lord before thy birth,
I am he that is thy lord till thou turn earth :
I make the night more dark, and all the morrow
Dark as the night whose darkness was my breath :
O fool, my name is sorrow ;
Thou fool, my name is death.'

And he that heard spake not, and looked right on
Again, and Love was gone.

Through many a night toward many a wearier day
His spirit bore his body down its way.
Through many a day toward many a wearier night
His soul sustained his sorrows in her sight.
And earth was bitter, and heaven, and even the sea
Sorrowful even as he.
And the wind helped not, and the sun was dumb ;
And with too long strong stress of grief to be
His heart grew sere and numb.

And one bright eve ere summer in autumn sank
At stardawn standing on a grey sea-bank

He felt the wind fitfully shift and heave
As toward a stormier eve;
And all the wan wide sea shuddered; and earth
Shook underfoot as toward some timeless birth,
Intolerable and inevitable; and all
Heaven, darkling, trembled like a stricken thrall.
And far out of the quivering east, and far
From past the moonrise and its guiding star,
Began a noise of tempest and a light
That was not of the lightning; and a sound
Rang with it round and round
That was not of the thunder; and a flight
As of blown clouds by night,
That was not of them; and with songs and cries
That sang and shrieked their soul out at the skies
A shapeless earthly storm of shapes began
From all ways round to move in on the man,
Clamorous against him silent; and their feet
Were as the wind's are fleet,
And their shrill songs were as wild birds' are sweet.

And as when all the world of earth was wronged
And all the host of all men driven afoam
By the red hand of Rome,
Round some fierce amphitheatre overthronged
With fair clear faces full of bloodier lust
Than swells and stings the tiger when his mood
Is fieriest after blood
And drunk with trampling of the murderous must
That soaks and stains the tortuous close-coiled wood
Made monstrous with its myriad-mustering brood,
Face by fair face panted and gleamed and pressed,
And breast by passionate breast

Heaved hot with ravenous rapture, as they quaffed
The red ripe full fume of the deep live draught,
The sharp quick reek of keen fresh bloodshed, blown
Through the dense deep drift up to the emperor's throne
From the under steaming sands
With clamour of all-applausive throats and hands,
Mingling in mirthful time
With shrill blithe mockeries of the lithe-limbed mime:
So from somewhence far forth of the unbeholden,
Dreadfully driven from over and after and under,
Fierce, blown through fifes of brazen blast and golden,
With sound of chiming waves that drown the thunder
Or thunder that strikes dumb the sea's own chimes,
Began the bellowing of the bull-voiced mimes,
Terrible; firs bowed down as briars or palms
Even at the breathless blast as of a breeze
Fulfilled with clamour and clangour and storms of psalms;
Red hands rent up the roots of old-world trees,
Thick flames of torches tossed as tumbling seas
Made mad the moonless and infuriate air
That, ravening, revelled in the riotous hair
And raiment of the furred Bassarides.

So came all those in on him; and his heart,
As out of sleep suddenly struck astart,
Danced, and his flesh took fire of theirs, and grief
Was as a last year's leaf
Blown dead far down the wind's way; and he set
His pale mouth to the brightest mouth it met
That laughed for love against his lips, and bade
Follow; and in following all his blood grew glad

And as again a sea-bird's ; for the wind
Took him to bathe him deep round breast and brow
Not as it takes a dead leaf drained and thinned,
But as the brightest bay-flower blown on bough,
Set springing toward it singing : and they rode
By many a vine-leafed, many a rose-hung road,
Exalt with exultation ; many a night
Set all its stars upon them as for spies
On many a moon-bewildering mountain-height
Where he rode only by the fierier light
Of his dread lady's hot sweet hungering eyes.
For the moon wandered witless of her way,
Spell-stricken by strong magic in such wise
As wizards use to set the stars astray.
And in his ears the music that makes mad
Beat always ; and what way the music bade,
That alway rode he ; nor was any sleep
His, nor from height nor deep.
But heaven was as red iron, slumberless,
And had no heart to bless ;
And earth lay sere and darkling as distraught,
And help in her was nought.

Then many a midnight, many a morn and even,
His mother, passing forth of her fair heaven,
With goodlier gifts than all save gods can give
From earth or from the heaven where sea-things live,
With shine of sea-flowers through the bay-leaf braid
Woven for a crown her foam-white hands had made
To crown him with land's laurel and sea-dew,
Sought the sea-bird that was her boy : but he
Sat panther-throned beside Erigone,
Riding the red ways of the revel through
Midmost of pale-mouthed passion's crownless crew.

Till on some winter's dawn of some dim year
He let the vine-bit on the panther's lip
Slide, and the green rein slip,
And set his eyes to seaward, nor gave ear
If sound from landward hailed him, dire or dear;
And passing forth of all those fair fierce ranks
Back to the grey sea-banks,
Against a sea-rock lying, aslant the steep,
Fell after many sleepless dreams on sleep.

And in his sleep the dun green light was shed
Heavily round his head
That through the veil of sea falls fathom-deep,
Blurred like a lamp's that when the night drops dead
Dies; and his eyes gat grace of sleep to see
The deep divine dark dayshine of the sea,
Dense water-walls and clear dusk water-ways,
Broad-based, or branching as a sea-flower sprays
That side or this dividing; and anew
The glory of all her glories that he knew.
And in sharp rapture of recovering tears
He woke on fire with yearnings of old years,
Pure as one purged of pain that passion bore,
Ill child of bitter mother; for his own
Looked laughing toward him from her midsea throne,
Up toward him there ashore.

Thence in his heart the great same joy began,
Of child that made him man:
And turned again from all hearts else on quest,
He communed with his own heart, and had rest.
And like sea-winds upon loud waters ran
His days and dreams together, till the joy
Burned in him of the boy.

Till the earth's great comfort and the sweet sea's
breath
Breathed and blew life in where was heartless death,
Death spirit-stricken of soul-sick days, where strife
Of thought and flesh made mock of death and life.
And grace returned upon him of his birth
Where heaven was mixed with heavenlike sea and
earth ;
And song shot forth strong wings that took the sun
From inward, fledged with might of sorrow and mirth
And father's fire made mortal in his son.
Nor was not spirit of strength in blast and breeze
To exalt again the sun's child and the sea's ;
For as wild mares in Thessaly grow great
With child of ravishing winds, that violate
Their leaping length of limb with manes like fire
And eyes outburning heaven's
With fires more violent than the lightning levin's
And breath drained out and desperate of desire,
Even so the spirit in him, when winds grew strong,
Grew great with child of song.
Nor less than when his veins first leapt for joy
To draw delight in such as burns a boy,
Now too the soul of all his senses felt
The passionate pride of deep sea-pulses dealt
Through nerve and jubilant vein
As from the love and largess of old time,
And with his heart again
The tidal throb of all the tides keep rhyme
And charm him from his own soul's separate sense
With infinite and invasive influence
That made strength sweet in him and sweetness
strong,
Being now no more a singer, but a song.

Till one clear day when brighter sea-wind blew
And louder sea-shine lightened, for the waves
Were full of godhead and the light that saves,
His father's, and their spirit had pierced him through,
He felt strange breath and light all round him shed
That bowed him down with rapture; and he knew
His father's hand, hallowing his humbled head,
And the old great voice of the old good time, that said:

"Child of my sunlight and the sea, from birth
A fosterling and fugitive on earth;
Sleepless of soul as wind or wave or fire,
A manchild with an ungrown God's desire;
Because thou hast loved nought mortal more than me,
Thy father, and thy mother-hearted sea;
Because thou hast set thine heart to sing, and sold
Life and life's love for song, God's living gold;
Because thou hast given thy flower and fire of youth
To feed men's hearts with visions, truer than truth;
Because thou hast kept in those world-wandering eyes
The light that makes me music of the skies;
Because thou hast heard with world-unwearied ears
The music that puts light into the spheres;
Have therefore in thine heart and in thy mouth
The sound of song that mingles north and south,
The song of all the winds that sing of me,
And in thy soul the sense of all the sea."

ON THE CLIFFS

ἱμερόφωνος ἀηδὼν.

SAPPHO.

BETWEEN the moondawn and the sundown here
The twilight hangs half starless ; half the sea
Still quivers as for love or pain or fear
Or pleasure mightier than these all may be
A man's live heart might beat
Wherein a God's with mortal blood should meet
And fill its pulse too full to bear the strain
With fear or love or pleasure's twin-born, pain.
Fiercely the gaunt woods to the grim soil cling
That bears for all fair fruits
Wan wild sparse flowers of windy and wintry spring
Between the tortive serpent-shapen roots
Wherethrough their dim growth hardly strikes and shoots
And shews one gracious thing
Hardly, to speak for summer one sweet word
Of summer's self scarce heard.
But higher the steep green sterile fields, thick-set
With flowerless hawthorn even to the upward verge
Whence the woods gathering watch new cliffs emerge
Higher than their highest of crowns that sea-winds fret,

Hold fast, for all that night or wind can say,
Some pale pure colour yet,
Too dim for green and luminous for grey.
Between the climbing inland cliffs above
And these beneath that breast and break the bay,
A barren peace too soft for hate or love
Broods on an hour too dim for night or day.

O wind, O wingless wind that walk'st the sea,
Weak wind, wing-broken, wearier wind than we,
Who are yet not spirit-broken, maimed like thee,
Who wail not in our inward night as thou
In the outer darkness now,
What word has the old sea given thee for mine ear
From thy faint lips to hear?
For some word would she send me, knowing not how.

Nay, what far other word
Than ever of her was spoken, or of me
Or all my winged white kinsfolk of the sea
Between fresh wave and wave was ever heard,
Cleaves the clear dark enwinding tree with tree
Too close for stars to separate and to see
Enmeshed in multitudinous unity?
What voice of what strong God hath stormed and
stirred
The fortressed rock of silence, rent apart
Even to the core Night's all-maternal heart?
What voice of God grown heavenlier in a bird,
Made keener of edge to smite
Than lightning—yea, thou knowest, O mother Night,
Keen as that cry from thy strange children sent
Wherewith the Athenian judgment-shrine was rent,
For wrath that all their wrath was vainly spent,

Their wrath for wrong made right
By justice in her own divine despite
That bade pass forth unblamed
The sinless matricide and unashamed ?
Yea, what new cry is this, what note more bright
Than their song's wing of words was dark of flight,
What word is this thou hast heard,
Thine and not thine or theirs, O Night, what word
More keen than lightning and more sweet than light ?
As all men's hearts grew godlike in one bird
And all those hearts cried on thee, crying with might,
Hear us, O mother Night.

Dumb is the mouth of darkness as of death :
Light, sound and life are one
In the eyes and lips of dawn that draw the sun
To hear what first child's word with glimmering
breath
Their weak wan weanling child the twilight saith ;
But night makes answer none.

God, if thou be God,—bird, if bird thou be,—
Do thou then answer me.
For but one word, what wind soever blow,
Is blown up usward ever from the sea.
In fruitless years of youth dead long ago
And deep beneath their own dead leaves and snow
Buried, I heard with bitter heart and sere
The same sea's word unchangeable, nor knew
But that mine own life-days were changeless too
And sharp and salt with unshed tear on tear
And cold and fierce and barren ; and my soul,
Sickening, swam weakly with bated breath
In a deep sea like death,

And felt the wind buffet her face with brine
Hard, and harsh thought on thought in long bleak roll
Blown by keen gusts of memory sad as thine
Heap the weight up of pain, and break, and leave
Strength scarce enough to grieve
In the sick heavy spirit, unmanned with strife
Of waves that beat at the tired lips of life.

Nay, sad may be man's memory, sad may be
The dream he weaves him as for shadow of thee,
But scarce one breathing-space, one heartbeat long,
Wilt thou take shadow of sadness on thy song.
Not thou, being more than man or man's desire,
Being bird and God in one,
With throat of gold and spirit of the sun ;
The sun whom all our souls and songs call sire,
Whose godhead gave thee, chosen of all our quire,
Thee only of all that serve, of all that sing
Before our sire and king,
Borne up some space on time's world-wandering wing,
This gift, this doom, to bear till time's wing tire—
Life everlasting of eternal fire.

Thee only of all ; yet can no memory say
How many a night and day
My heart has been as thy heart, and my life
As thy life is, a sleepless hidden thing,
Full of the thirst and hunger of winter and spring,
That seeks its food not in such love or strife
As fill men's hearts with passionate hours and rest.
From no loved lips and on no loving breast
Have I sought ever for such gifts as bring

Comfort, to stay the secret soul with sleep.
The joys, the loves, the labours, whence men reap
Rathe fruit of hopes and fears,
I have made not mine ; the best of all my days
Have been as those fair fruitless summer strays,
Those water-waifs that but the sea-wind steers,
Flakes of glad foam or flowers on footless ways
That take the wind in season and the sun,
And when the wind wills is their season done.

For all my days as all thy days from birth
My heart as thy heart was in me as thee,
Fire ; and not all the fountains of the sea
Have waves enough to quench it, nor on earth
Is fuel enough to feed,
While day sows night and night sows day for seed.

We were not marked for sorrow, thou nor I,
For joy nor sorrow, sister, were we made,
To take delight and grief to live and die,
Assuaged by pleasures or by pains affrayed
That melt men's hearts and alter ; we retain
A memory mastering pleasure and all pain,
A spirit within the sense of ear and eye,
A soul behind the soul, that seeks and sings
And makes our life move only with its wings
And feed but from its lips, that in return
Feed of our hearts wherein the old fires that burn
Have strength not to consume
Nor glory enough to exalt us past our doom.

Ah, ah, the doom (thou knowest whence rang that
wail)
Of the shrill nightingale!

(From whose wild lips, thou knowest, that wail was thrown)
For round about her have the great gods cast
A wing-borne body, and clothed her close and fast
With a sweet life that hath no part in moan.
But me, for me (how hadst thou heart to hear ?)
Remains a sundering with the two-edged spear.

Ah, for her doom! so cried in presage then
The bodeful bondslave of the king of men,
And might not win her will.
Too close the entangling dragnet woven of crime,
The snare of ill new-born of elder ill,
The curse of new time for an elder time,
Had caught, and held her yet,
Enmeshed intolerably in the intolerant net,
Who thought with craft to mock the God most high,
And win by wiles his crown of prophecy
From the Sun's hand sublime,
As God were man, to spare or to forget.

But thou,—the gods have given thee and forgiven thee
More than our master gave
That strange-eyed spirit-wounded strange-tongued slave
There questing houndlike where the roofs red-wet
Reeked as a wet red grave.
Life everlasting has their strange grace given thee,
Even hers whom thou wast wont to sing and serve
With eyes, but not with song, too swift to swerve ;
Yet might not even thine eyes estranged estrange her,
Who seeing thee too, but inly, burn and bleed
Like that pale princess-priest of Priam's seed,
For stranger service gave thee guerdon stranger ;

If this indeed be guerdon, this indeed
Her mercy, this thy meed—
That thou, being more than all we born, being higher
Than all heads crowned of him that only gives
The light whereby man lives,
The bay that bids man moved of God's desire
Lay hand on lute or lyre,
Set lip to trumpet or deflowered green reed—
If this were given thee for a grace indeed,
That thou, being first of all these, thou alone
Shouldst have the grace to die not, but to live
And lose nor change one pulse of song, one tone
Of all that were thy lady's and thine own,
Thy lady's whom thou criedst on to forgive,
Thou, priest and sacrifice on the altar-stone
Where none may worship not of all that live,
Love's priestess, errant on dark ways diverse ;
If this were grace indeed for Love to give,
If this indeed were blessing and no curse.

Love's priestess, mad with pain and joy of song,
Song's priestess, mad with joy and pain of love,
Name above all names that are lights above,
We have loved, praised, pitied, crowned and done
thee wrong,
O thou past praise and pity ; thou the sole
Utterly deathless, perfect only and whole
Immortal, body and soul.
For over all whom time hath overpast
The shadow of sleep inexorable is cast,
The implacable sweet shadow of perfect sleep
That gives not back what life gives death to keep ;
Yea, all that lived and loved and sang and sinned
Are all borne down death's cold sweet soundless wind

That blows all night and knows not whom its breath,
Darkling, may touch to death:
But one that wind hath touched and changed not,—one
Whose body and soul are parcel of the sun;
One that earth's fire could burn not, nor the sea
Quench; nor might human doom take hold on thee;
All praise, all pity, all dreams have done thee wrong,
All love, with eyes love-blinded from above;
Song's priestess, mad with joy and pain of love,
Love's priestess, mad with pain and joy of song.

Hast thou none other answer then for me
Than the air may have of thee,
Or the earth's warm woodlands girdling with green girth
Thy secret sleepless burning life on earth,
Or even the sea that once, being woman crowned
And girt with fire and glory of anguish round,
Thou wert so fain to seek to, fain to crave
If she would hear thee and save
And give thee comfort of thy great green grave?
Because I have known thee always who thou art,
Thou knowest, have known thee to thy heart's own heart,
Nor ever have given light ear to storied song
That did thy sweet name sweet unwitting wrong,
Nor ever have called thee nor would call for shame,
Thou knowest, but inly by thine only name,
Sappho—because I have known thee and loved, hast thou
None other answer now?
As brother and sister were we, child and bird,
Since thy first Lesbian word

Flamed on me, and I knew not whence I knew
This was the song that struck my whole soul through,
Pierced my keen spirit of sense with edge more keen,
Even when I knew not,—even ere sooth was seen,—
When thou wast but the tawny sweet winged thing
Whose cry was but of spring.

And yet even so thine ear should hear me—yea,
Hear me this nightfall by this northland bay,
Even for their sake whose loud good word I had,
Singing of thee in the all-beloved clime
Once, where the windy wine of spring makes mad
Our sisters of Majano, who kept time
Clear to my choral rhyme.
Yet was the song acclaimed of these aloud
Whose praise had made mute humbleness misproud,
The song with answering song applauded thus,
But of that Daulian dream of Itylus.
So but for love's love haply was it—nay,
How else?—that even their song took my song's part,
For love of love and sweetness of sweet heart,
Or god-given glorious madness of mid May
And heat of heart and hunger and thirst to sing,
Full of the new wine of the wind of spring.

Or if this were not, and it be not sin
To hold myself in spirit of thy sweet kin,
In heart and spirit of song;
If this my great love do thy grace no wrong,
Thy grace that gave me grace to dwell therein;
If thy gods thus be my gods, and their will
Made my song part of thy song—even such part
As man's hath of God's heart—
And my life like as thy life to fulfil;

What have our gods then given us? Ah, to thee,
Sister, much more, much happier than to me,
Much happier things they have given, and more of grace
Than falls to man's light race;
For lighter are we, all our love and pain
Lighter than thine, who knowest of time or place
Thus much, that place nor time
Can heal or hurt or lull or change again
The singing soul that makes his soul sublime
Who hears the far fall of its fire-fledged rhyme
Fill darkness as with bright and burning rain
Till all the live gloom inly glows, and light
Seems with the sound to cleave the core of night.

The singing soul that moves thee, and that moved
When thou wast woman, and their songs divine
Who mixed for Grecian mouths heaven's lyric wine
Fell dumb, fell down reproved
Before one sovereign Lesbian song of thine.
That soul, though love and life had fain held fast,
Wind-winged with fiery music, rose and past
Through the indrawn hollow of earth and heaven and hell,
As through some strait sea-shell
The wide sea's immemorial song,—the sea
That sings and breathes in strange men's ears of thee
How in her barren bride-bed, void and vast,
Even thy soul sang itself to sleep at last.

To sleep? Ah, then, what song is this, that here
Makes all the night one ear,
One ear fulfilled and mad with music, one
Heart kindling as the heart of heaven, to hear
A song more fiery than the awakening sun

Sings, when his song sets fire
To the air and clouds that build the dead night's pyre?
O thou of divers-coloured mind, O thou
Deathless, God's daughter subtle-souled—lo, now,
Now too the song above all songs, in flight
Higher than the day-star's height,
And sweet as sound the moving wings of night:
Thou of the divers-coloured seat—behold,
Her very song of old!—
O deathless, O God's daughter subtle-souled!
That same cry through this boskage overhead
Rings round reiterated,
Palpitates as the last palpitated,
The last that panted through her lips and died
Not down this grey north sea's half sapped cliff-side
That crumbles toward the coastline, year by year
More near the sands and near;
The last loud lyric fiery cry she cried,
Heard once on heights Leucadian,—heard not here.

Not here; for this that fires our northland night,
This is the song that made
Love fearful, even the heart of love afraid,
With the great anguish of its great delight.
No swan-song, no far-fluttering half-drawn breath,
No word that love of love's sweet nature saith,
No dirge that lulls the narrowing lids of death,
No healing hymn of peace-prevented strife,—
This is her song of life.

I loved thee,—hark, one tenderer note than all—
Atthis, of old time, once—one low long fall,
Sighing—one long low lovely loveless call,

Dying—one pause in song so flamelike fast—
Atthis, long since in old time overpast—
One soft first pause and last.
One,—then the old rage of rapture's fieriest rain
Storms all the music-maddened night again.

Child of God, close craftswoman, I beseech thee,
Bid not ache nor agony break nor master,
Lady, my spirit—
O thou her mistress, might her cry not reach thee?
Our Lady of all men's loves, could Love go past her,
Pass, and not hear it?

She hears not as she heard not; hears not me,
O treble-natured mystery,—how should she
Hear, or give ear?—who heard and heard not thee;
Heard, and went past, and heard not; but all time
Hears all that all the ravin of his years
Hath cast not wholly out of all men's ears
And dulled to death with deep dense funeral chime
Of their reiterate rhyme.
And now of all songs uttering all her praise,
All hers who had thy praise and did thee wrong,
Abides one song yet of her lyric days,
Thine only, this thy song.

O soul triune, woman and god and bird,
Man, man at least has heard.
All ages call thee conqueror, and thy cry
The mightiest as the least beneath the sky
Whose heart was ever set to song, or stirred
With wind of mounting music blown more high
Than wildest wing may fly,
Hath heard or hears,—even Æschylus as I.

But when thy name was woman, and thy word
Human,—then haply, surely then meseems
This thy bird's note was heard on earth of none,
Of none save only in dreams.
In all the world then surely was but one
Song; as in heaven at highest one sceptred sun
Regent, on earth here surely without fail
One only, one imperious nightingale.
Dumb was the field, the woodland mute, the lawn
Silent; the hill was tongueless as the vale
Even when the last fair waif of cloud that felt
Its heart beneath the colouring moonrays melt,
At high midnoon of midnight half withdrawn,
Bared all the sudden deep divine moondawn.
Then, unsaluted by her twin-born tune,
That latter timeless morning of the moon
Rose past its hour of moonrise; clouds gave way
To the old reconquering ray,
But no song answering made it more than day;
No cry of song by night
Shot fire into the cloud-constraining light.
One only, one Æolian island heard
Thrill, but through no bird's throat,
In one strange manlike maiden's godlike note,
The song of all these as a single bird.
Till the sea's portal was as funeral gate
For that sole singer in all time's ageless date
Singled and signed for so triumphal fate,
All nightingales but one in all the world
All her sweet life were silent; only then,
When her life's wing of womanhood was furled,
Their cry, this cry of thine was heard again,
As of me now, of any born of men.

Through sleepless clear spring nights filled full of thee,
Rekindled here, thy ruling song has thrilled
The deep dark air and subtle tender sea
And breathless hearts with one bright sound fulfilled.
Or at midnoon to me
Swimming, and birds about my happier head
Skimming, one smooth soft way by water and air,
To these my bright born brethren and to me
Hath not the clear wind borne or seemed to bear
A song wherein all earth and heaven and sea
Were molten in one music made of thee
To enforce us, O our sister of the shore,
Look once in heart back landward and adore?
For songless were we sea-mews, yet had we
More joy than all things joyful of thee—more,
Haply, than all things happiest; nay, save thee,
In thy strong rapture of imperious joy
Too high for heart of sea-borne bird or boy,
What living things were happiest if not we?
But knowing not love nor change nor wrath nor wrong,
No more we knew of song.

Song, and the secrets of it, and their might,
What blessings curse it and what curses bless,
I know them since my spirit had first in sight,
Clear as thy song's words or the live sun's light,
The small dark body's Lesbian loveliness
That held the fire eternal; eye and ear
Were as a god's to see, a god's to hear,
Through all his hours of daily and nightly chime,
The sundering of the two-edged spear of time:

The spear that pierces even the sevenfold shields
Of mightiest Memory, mother of all songs made,
And wastes all songs as roseleaves kissed and frayed
As here the harvest of the foam-flowered fields;
But thine the spear may waste not that he wields
Since first the God whose soul is man's live breath,
The sun whose face hath our sun's face for shade,
Put all the light of life and love and death
Too strong for life, but not for love too strong,
Where pain makes peace with pleasure in thy song,
And in thine heart, where love and song make strife,
Fire everlasting of eternal life.

THE GARDEN OF CYMODOCE

Sea, and bright wind, and heaven of ardent air,
More dear than all things earth-born ; O to me
Mother more dear than love's own longing, sea,
More than love's eyes are, fair,
Be with my spirit of song as wings to bear,
As fire to feel and breathe and brighten ; be
A spirit of sense more deep of deity,
A light of love, if love may be, more strong
In me than very song.
For song I have loved with second love, but thee,
Thee first, thee, mother ; ere my songs had breath,
That love of loves, whose bondage makes man free,
Was in me strong as death.
And seeing no slave may love thee, no, not one
That loves not freedom more,
And more for thy sake loves her, and for hers
Thee ; or that hates not, on whate'er thy shore
Or what thy wave soever, all things done
Of man beneath the sun
In his despite and thine, to cross and curse
Your light and song that as with lamp and verse
Guide safe the strength of our sphered universe,
Thy breath it was, thou knowest, and none but thine,
That taught me love of one thing more divine.

Ah, yet my youth was old [*Str.* 1.
Its first years dead and cold
As last year's autumn's gold,
And all my spirit of singing sick and sad and sere,
Or ever I might behold
The fairest of thy fold
Engirt, enringed, enrolled,
In all thy flower-sweet flock of islands dear and near.

Yet in my heart I deemed [*Str.* 2.
The fairest things, meseemed,
Truth, dreaming, ever dreamed,
Had made mine eyes already like a god's to see:
Of all sea-things that were
Clothed on with water and air,
That none could live more fair
Than thy sweet love long since had shown for love to me.

I knew not, mother of mine, [*Ant.* 1
That one birth more divine
Than all births else of thine
That hang like flowers or jewels on thy deep soft breast
Was left for me to shine
Above thy girdling line
Of bright and breathing brine,
To take mine eyes with rapture and my sense with rest.

That this was left for me, [*Ant.* 2.
Mother, to have of thee,
To touch, to taste, to see,
To feel as fire fulfilling all my blood and breath,

As wine of living fire
Keen as the heart's desire
That makes the heart its pyre
And on its burning visions burns itself to death.

For here of all thy waters, here of all
Thy windy ways the wildest, and beset
As some beleaguered city's war-breached wall
With deaths enmeshed all round it in deep net,
Thick sown with rocks deadlier than steel, and fierce
With loud cross-countering currents, where the ship
Flags, flickering like a wind-bewildered leaf,
The densest weft of waves that prow may pierce
Coils round the sharpest warp of shoals that dip
Suddenly, scarce well under for one brief
Keen breathing-space between the streams adverse,
Scarce showing the fanged edge of one hungering lip
Or one tooth lipless of the ravening reef;
And midmost of the murderous water's web
All round it stretched and spun,
Laughs, reckless of rough tide and raging ebb,
The loveliest thing that shines against the sun.

O flower of all wind-flowers and sea-flowers, [*Str.* 3.
Made lovelier by love of the sea
Than thy golden own field-flowers, or tree-flowers
Like foam of the sea-facing tree!
No foot but the seamew's there settles
On the spikes of thine anthers like horns,
With snow-coloured spray for thy petals,
Black rocks for thy thorns.

Was it here, in the waste of his waters, [*Ant.* 3.
That the lordly north wind, when his love
On the fairest of many king's daughters
Bore down for a spoil from above,
Chose forth of all farthest far islands
As a haven to harbour her head,
Of all lowlands on earth and all highlands,
His bride-worthy bed?

Or haply, my sea-flower, he found thee [*Str.* 4.
Made fast as with anchors to land,
And broke, that his waves might be round thee,
Thy fetters like rivets of sand?
And afar by the blast of him drifted
Thy blossom of beauty was borne,
As a lark by the heart in her lifted
To mix with the morn?

By what rapture of rage, by what vision [*Ant.* 4.
Of a heavenlier heaven than above,
Was he moved to devise thy division
From the land as a rest for his love?
As a nest when his wings would remeasure
The ways where of old they would be,
As a bride-bed upbuilt for his pleasure
By sea-rock and sea?

For in no deeps of midmost inland May
More flowerbright flowers the hawthorn, or more sweet
Swells the wild gold of the earth for wandering feet;
For on no northland way
Crowds the close whin-bloom closer, set like thee

With thorns about for fangs of sea-rock shown
Through blithe lips of the bitter brine to lee ;
Nor blithelier landward comes the sea-wind blown,
Nor blithelier leaps the land-wind back to sea :
Nor louder springs the living song of birds
To shame our sweetest words.
And in the narrowest of thine hollowest hold
For joy thine aspens quiver as though for cold,
And many a self-lit flower-illumined tree
Outlaughs with snowbright or with rosebright glee
The laughter of the fields whose laugh is gold.
Yea, even from depth to height,
Even thine own beauty with its own delight
Fulfils thine heart in thee an hundredfold
Beyond the larger hearts of islands bright
With less intense contraction of desire
Self-satiate, centred in its own deep fire ;
Of shores not self-enchanted and entranced
By heavenly severance from all shadow of mirth
Or mourning upon earth :
As thou, by no similitude enhanced,
By no fair foil made fairer, but alone
Fair as could be no beauty save thine own,
And wondrous as no world-beholden wonder :
Throned, with the world's most perilous sea for
throne,
And praised from all its choral throats of thunder.

Yet one praise hast thou, holier [*Str.* 5.
Than praise of theirs may be,
To exalt thee, wert thou lowlier
Than all that take the sea
With shores whence waves ebb slowlier
Than these fall off from thee :

That One, whose name gives glory, [*Ant.* 5.
One man whose life makes light,
One crowned and throned in story
Above all empire's height,
Came, where thy straits run hoary,
To hold thee fast in sight ;

With hallowing eyes to hold thee, [*Str.* 6.
With rapturous heart to read,
To encompass and enfold thee
With love whence all men feed,
To brighten and behold thee,
Who is mightiest of man's seed :

More strong than strong disaster, [*Ant.* 6.
For fate and fear too strong ;
Earth's friend, whose eyes look past her,
Whose hands would purge of wrong ;
Our lord, our light, our master,
Whose word sums up all song.

Be it April or September [*Str.* 7.
That plays his perfect part,
Burn June or blow December,
Thou canst not in thine heart
But rapturously remember,
All heavenlike as thou art,

Whose footfall made thee fairer, [*Ant.* 7.
Whose passage more divine,
Whose hand, our thunder-bearer,
Held fire that bade thee shine
With subtler glory and rarer
Than thrills the sun's own shrine.

Who knows how then his godlike banished gaze
Turned haply from its goal of natural days
And homeward hunger for the clear French clime,
Toward English earth, whereunder now the Accursed
Rots, in the hate of all men's hearts inhearsed,
A carrion ranker to the sense of time
For that sepulchral gift of stone and lime
By royal grace laid on it, less of weight
Than the load laid by fate,
Fate, misbegotten child of his own crime,
Son of as foul a bastard-bearing birth
As even his own on earth;
Less heavy than the load of cursing piled
By loyal grace of all souls undefiled
On one man's head, whose reeking soul made rotten
The loathed live corpse on earth once misbegotten?
But when our Master's homeless feet were here
France yet was foul with joy more foul than fear,
And slavery chosen, more vile by choice of chance
Than dull damnation of inheritance
From Russian year to year
Alas fair mother of men, alas my France,
What ailed thee so to fall, that wert so dear
For all men's sake to all men, in such trance,
Plague-stricken? Had the very Gods, that saw
Thy glory lighten on us for a law,
Thy gospel go before us for a guide,
Had these waxed envious of our love and awe,
Or was it less their envy than thy pride
That bared thy breast for the obscene vulture-claw,
High priestess, by whose mouth Love prophesied
That fate should yet mean freedom? Howsoever,
That hour, the helper of men's hearts, we praise,
Which blots out of man's book of after days
The name above all names abhorred for ever.

And His name shall we praise not, whom these flowers,
These rocks and ravening waters bound for girth
Round this wild starry spanlong plot of earth,
Beheld, the mightier for those heavier hours
That bowed his heart not down
Nor marred one crowning blossom of his crown?
For surely, might we say,
Even from the dark deep sea-gate that makes way
Through channelled darkness for the darkling day
Hardly to let men's faltering footfall win
The sunless passage in,
Where breaks a world aflower against the sun,
A small sweet world of wave-encompassed wonder
Kept from the wearier landward world asunder
With violence of wild waters, and with 'hunder
Of many winds as one,
To where the keen sea-current grinds and frets
The black bright sheer twin flameless Altarlets
That lack no live blood-sacrifice they crave
Of shipwreck and the shrine-subservient wave,
Having for priest the storm-wind, and for choir
Lightnings and clouds whose prayer and praise are fire,
All the isle acclaimed him coming; she, the least
Of all things loveliest that the sea's love hides
From strange men's insult, walled about with tides
That bid strange guests back from her flower-strewn feast,
Set all her fields aflower, her flowers aflame,
To applaud him that he came.
Nor surely flashed not something of delight
Through that steep strait of rock whose twin-cliffed height

Links crag with crag reiterate, land with land,
By one sheer thread of narrowing precipice
Bifront, that binds and sunders
Abyss from hollower imminent abyss
And wilder isle with island, blind for bliss
Of sea that lightens and of wind that thunders;
Nor pealed not surely back from deep to steep
Reverberate acclamation, steep to deep
Inveterately reclaiming and replying
Praise, and response applausive; nor the sea,
For all the sea-wind's crying,
Knew not the song her sister, even as she
Thundering, or like her confluent spring-tides brightening,
And like her darkness lightening;
The song that moved about him silent, now
Both soundless wings refolded and refurled
On that Promethean brow,
Then quivering as for flight that wakes the world.

From the roots of the rocks underlying the gulfs that engird it around [*Str.* 8.
Was the isle not enkindled with light of him landing, or thrilled not with sound?
Yea, surely the sea like a harper laid hand on the shore as a lyre,
As the lyre in his own for a birthright of old that was given of his sire,
And the hand of the child was put forth on the chords yet alive and aflame
From the hand of the God that had wrought it in heaven; and the hand was the same.

And the tongue of the child spake, singing; and never a note that he sang,
But the strings made answer unstricken, as though for the God they rang.
And the eyes of the child shone, lightening; and touched as by life at his nod,
They shuddered with music, and quickened as though from the glance of the God.
So trembled the heart of the hills and the rocks to receive him, and yearned
With desirous delight of his presence and love that beholding him burned.
Yea, down through the mighty twin hollows where never the sunlight shall be,
Deep sunk under imminent earth, and subdued to the stress of the sea,
That feel when the dim week changes by change of their tides in the dark,
As the wave sinks under within them, reluctant, removed from its mark,
Even there in the terror of twilight in bloom with its blossoms ablush,
Did a sense of him touch not the gleam of their flowers with a fierier flush?
Though the sun they behold not for ever, yet knew they not over them One
Whose soul was the soul of the morning, whose song was the song of the sun?
But the secrets inviolate of sunlight in hollows untrodden of day,
Shall he dream what are these who beholds not? or he that hath seen, shall he say?
For the path is for passage of sea-mews; and he that hath glided and leapt

Over sea-grass and sea-rock, alighting as one from a citadel crept
That his foemen beleaguer, descending by darkness and stealth, at the last
Peers under, and all is as hollow to hellward, agape and aghast.
But afloat and afar in the darkness a tremulous colour subsides [*Ant.* 8.
From the crimson high crest of the purple-peaked roof to the soft-coloured sides
That brighten as ever they widen till downward the level is won
Of the soundless and colourless water that knows not the sense of the sun :
From the crown of the culminant arch to the floor of the lakelet abloom,
One infinite blossom of blossoms innumerable aflush through the gloom.
All under the deeps of the darkness are glimmering ; all over impends
An immeasurable infinite flower of the dark that dilates and descends,
That exults and expands in its breathless and blind efflorescence of heart
As it broadens and bows to the wave-ward, and breathes not, and hearkens apart.
As a beaker inverse at a feast on Olympus, exhausted of wine,
But inlaid as with rose from the lips of Dione that left it divine :
From the lips everliving of laughter and love everlasting, that leave
In the cleft of his heart who shall kiss them a snake to corrode it and cleave.

So glimmers the gloom into glory, the glory recoils into gloom,
That the eye of the sun could not kindle, the lip not of Love could relume.
So darkens reverted the cup that the kiss of her mouth set on fire :
So blackens a brand in his eyeshot asmoulder awhile from the pyre.
For the beam from beneath and without it refrangent again from the wave
Strikes up through the portal a ghostly reverse on the dome of the cave,
On the depth of the dome ever darkling and dim to the crown of its arc :
That the sun-coloured tapestry, sunless for ever, may soften the dark.
But within through the side-seen archway a glimmer again from the right
Is the seal of the sea's tide set on the mouth of the mystery of night.
And the seal on the seventh day breaks but a little, that man by its mean
May behold what the sun hath not looked on, the stars of the night have not seen.

Even like that hollow-bosomed rose, inverse
And infinite, the heaven of thy vast verse,
Our Master, over all our souls impends,
Imminent ; we, with heart-enkindled eyes
Upwondering, search the music-moulded skies
Sphere by sweet sphere, concordant as it blends
Light of bright sound, sound of clear light, in one,
As all the stars found utterance through the sun.

And all that heaven is like a rose in bloom,
Flower-coloured, where its own sun's fires illume
As from one central and imperious heart
The whole sky's every part :
But lightening still and darkling downward, lo
The light and darkness of it,
The leaping of the lamping levin afar
Between the full moon and the sunset star,
The war-song of the sounding skies aglow,
That have the herald thunder for their prophet :
From north to south the lyric lights that leap,
The tragic sundawns reddening east and west
As with bright blood from one Promethean breast,
The peace of noon that strikes the sea to sleep,
The wail over the world of all that weep,
The peace of night when death brings life on rest.

Goddess who gatherest all the herded waves
Into thy great sweet pastureless green fold,
Even for our love of old,
I pray thee by thy power that slays and saves,
Take thou my song of this thy flower to keep
Who hast my heart in hold ;
And from thine high place of thy garden-steep,
Where one sheer terrace oversees thy deep
From the utmost rock-reared height
Down even to thy dear depths of night and light,
Take my song's salutation ; and on me
Breathe back the benediction of thy sea.

Between two seas the sea-bird's wing makes halt,
Wind-weary; while with lifting head he waits
For breath to reinspire him from the gates
That open still toward sunrise on the vault
High-domed of morning, and in flight's default
With spreading sense of spirit anticipates
What new sea now may lure beyond the straits
His wings exulting that her winds exalt
And fill them full as sails to seaward spread,
Fulfilled with fair speed's promise. Pass, my song,
Forth to the haven of thy desire and dread,
The presence of our lord, long loved and long
Far off above beholden, who to thee
Was as light kindling all a windy sea.

BIRTHDAY ODE

FOR THE ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL OF VICTOR HUGO, FEBRUARY 26, 1880

Spring, born in heaven ere many a springtime flown, [*Strophe* 1.
Dead spring that sawest on earth
A babe of deathless birth,
A flower of rosier flowerage than thine own,
A glory of goodlier godhead ; even this day,
That floods the mist of February with May,
And strikes death dead with sunlight, and the breath
Whereby the deadly doers are done to death,
They that in day's despite
Would crown the imperial night,
And in deep hate of insubmissive spring
Rethrone the royal winter for a king,
This day that casts the days of darkness down
Low as a broken crown,
We call thee from the gulf of deeds and days,
Deathless and dead, to hear us whom we praise.

A light of many lights about thine head, [*Antistrophe* 1.
Lights manifold and one,
Stars molten in a sun,
A sun of divers beams incorporated,

Compact of confluent aureoles, each more fair
Than man, save only at highest of man, may wear,
So didst thou rise, when this our grey-grown age
Had trod two paces of his pilgrimage,
Two paces through the gloom
From his fierce father's tomb,
Led by cross lights of lightnings, and the flame
That burned in darkness round one darkling name;
So didst thou rise, nor knewest thy glory, O thou
Re-risen upon us now,
The glory given thee for a grace to give,
And take the praise of all men's hearts that live.

First in the dewy ray [*Epode* 1.
Ere dawn be slain of day
The fresh crowned lilies of discrowned kings' prime
Sprang splendid as of old
With moonlight-coloured gold
And rays refract from the oldworld heaven of time;
Pale with proud light of stars decreased
In westward wane reluctant from the conquering east.

But even between their golden olden bloom [*Str.* 2.
Strange flowers of wildwood glory,
With frost and moonshine hoary,
Thrust up the new growths of their green-leaved gloom,
Red buds of ballad blossom, where the dew
Blushed as with bloodlike passion, and its hue
Was as the life and love of hearts on flame,
And fire from forth of each live chalice came:
Young sprays of elder song,
Stem straight and petal strong,

Bright foliage with dark frondage overlaid,
And light the lovelier for its lordlier shade ;
And morn and even made loud in woodland lone
With cheer of clarions blown,
And through the tournay's clash and clarion's cheer
Laugh to laugh echoing, tear washed off by tear.

Then eastward far past northland lea and lawn
Beneath a heavier light [*Ant.* 2.
Of stormier day and night
Began the music of the heaven of dawn ;
Bright sound of battle along the Grecian waves,
Loud light of thunder above the Median graves,
New strife, new song on Æschylean seas,
Canaris risen above Themistocles ;
Old glory of warrior ghosts
Shed fresh on filial hosts,
With dewfall redder than the dews of day,
And earth-born lightnings out of bloodbright spray ;
Then through the flushed grey gloom on shadowy sheaves
Low flights of falling leaves ;
And choirs of birds transfiguring as they throng
All the world's twilight and the soul's to song.

Voices more dimly deep [*Ep.* 2.
Than the inmost heart of sleep,
And tenderer than the rose-mouthed morning's lips ;
And midmost of them heard
The viewless water's word,
The sea's breath in the wind's wing and the ship's,
That bids one swell and sound and smite
And rend that other in sunder as with fangs by night.

But ah! the glory of shadow and mingling ray, [*Str.* 3.
The story of morn and even
Whose tale was writ in heaven
And had for scroll the night, for scribe the day!
For scribe the prophet of the morning, far
Exalted over twilight and her star;
For scroll beneath his Apollonian hand
The dim twin wastes of sea and glimmering land.
Hark, on the hill-wind, clear
For all men's hearts to hear
Sound like a stream at nightfall from the steep
That all time's depths might answer, deep to deep,
With trumpet-measures of triumphal wail
From windy vale to vale,
The crying of one for love that strayed and sinned
Whose brain took madness of the mountain wind.

Between the birds of brighter and duskier wing, [*Ant.* 3.
What mightier-moulded forms
Girt with red clouds and storms
Mix their strong hearts with theirs that soar and sing?
Before the storm-blast blown of death's dark horn
The marriage moonlight withers, that the morn
For two made one may find three made by death
One ruin at the blasting of its breath:
Clothed with heart's flame renewed
And strange new maidenhood,
Faith lightens on the lips that bloomed for hire
Pure as the lightning of love's first-born fire:
Wide-eyed and patient ever, till the curse
Find where to fall and pierce,
Keen expiation whets with edge more dread
A father's wrong to smite a father's head.

Borgia, supreme from birth [*Ep.* 3.
As loveliest born on earth
Since earth bore ever women that were fair;
Scarce known of her own house
If daughter or sister or spouse;
Who holds men's hearts yet helpless with her hair;
The direst of divine things made,
Bows down her amorous aureole half suffused with shade.

As red the fire-scathed royal northland bloom, [*Str.* 4.
That left our story a name
Dyed through with blood and flame
Ere her life shrivelled from a fierier doom
Than theirs her priests bade pass from earth in fire
To slake the thirst of God their Lord's desire:
As keen the blast of love-enkindled fate
That burst the Paduan tyrant's guarded gate:
As sad the softer moan
Made one with music's own
For one whose feet made music as they fell
On ways by loveless love made hot from hell:
But higher than these and all the song thereof
The perfect heart of love,
The heart by fraud and hate once crucified,
That, dying, gave thanks, and in thanksgiving died.

Above the windy walls that rule the Rhine [*Ant.* 4.
A noise of eagles' wings
And wintry war-time rings,
With roar of ravage trampling corn and vine
And storm of wrathful wassail dashed with song,
And under these the watch of wreakless wrong,

With fire of eyes anhungered ; and above
These, the light of the stricken eyes of love,
The faint sweet eyes that follow
The wind-outwinging swallow,
And face athirst with young wan yearning mouth
Turned after toward the unseen all-golden south,
Hopeless to see the birds back ere life wane,
Or the leaves born again ;
And still the might and music mastering fate
Of life more strong than death and love than hate.

In spectral strength biform [*Ep.* 4.
Stand the twin sons of storm
Transfigured by transmission of one hand
That gives the new-born time
Their semblance more sublime
Than once it lightened over each man's land ;
There Freedom's winged and wide-mouthed hound,
And here our high Dictator, in his son discrowned.

What strong-limbed shapes of kindred throng round these [*Str.* 5.
Before, between, behind,
Sons born of one man's mind,
Fed at his hands and fostered round his knees ?
Fear takes the spirit in thraldom at his nod,
And pity makes it as the spirit of God,
As his own soul that from her throne above
Sheds on all souls of men her showers of love,
On all earth's evil and pain
Pours mercy forth as rain
And comfort as the dewfall on dry land ;
And feeds with pity from a faultless hand

All by their own fault stricken, all cast out
By all men's scorn or doubt,
Or with their own hands wounded, or by fate
Brought into bondage of men's fear or hate.

In violence of strange visions north and south
Confronted, east and west, [*Ant.* 5.
With frozen or fiery breast,
Eyes fixed or fevered, pale or bloodred mouth,
Kept watch about his dawn-enkindled dreams;
But ere high noon a light of nearer beams
Made his young heaven of manhood more benign,
And love made soft his lips with spiritual wine,
And left them fired, and fed
With sacramental bread,
And sweet with honey of tenderer words than tears
To feed men's hopes and fortify men's fears,
And strong to silence with benignant breath
The lips that doom to death,
And swift with speech like fire in fiery lands
To melt the steel's edge in the headsman's hands.

Higher than they rose of old, [*Ep.* 5.
New builded now, behold,
The live great likeness of Our Lady's towers;
And round them like a dove
Wounded, and sick with love,
One fair ghost moving, crowned with fateful flowers,
Watched yet with eyes of bloodred lust
And eyes of love's heart broken and unbroken trust.

But sadder always under shadowier skies, [*Str.* 6.
More pale and sad and clear

Waxed always, drawn more near,
The face of Duty lit with Love's own eyes ;
Till the awful hands that culled in rosier hours
From fairy-footed fields of wild old flowers
And sorcerous woods of Rhineland, green and hoary,
Young children's chaplets of enchanted story,
The great kind hands that showed
Exile its homeward road,
And, as man's helper made his foeman God,
Of pity and mercy wrought themselves a rod,
And opened for Napoleon's wandering kin
France, and bade enter in,
And threw for all the doors of refuge wide,
Took to them lightning in the thunder-tide.

For storm on earth above had risen from under,
Out of the hollow of hell, [*Ant.* 6.
Such storm as never fell
From darkest deeps of heaven distract with thunder ;
A cloud of cursing, past all shape of thought,
More foul than foulest dreams, and overfraught
With all obscene things and obscure of birth
That ever made infection of man's earth ;
Having all hell for cloak
Wrapped round it as a smoke
And in its womb such offspring so defiled
As earth bare never for her loathliest child,
Rose, brooded, reddened, broke, and with its breath
Put France to poisonous death ;
Yea, far as heaven's red labouring eye could glance,
France was not, save in men cast forth of France.

Then,—while the plague-sore grew [*Ep.* 6.
Two darkling decades through,
And rankled in the festering flesh of time,—

Where darkness binds and frees
The wildest of wild seas
In fierce mutations of the unslumbering clime,
There, sleepless too, o'er shuddering wrong
One hand appointed shook the reddening scourge of song.

And through the lightnings of the apparent word
Dividing shame's dense night [*Str.* 7.
Sounds lovelier than the light
And light more sweet than song from night's own bird
Mixed each their hearts with other, till the gloom
Was glorious as with all the stars in bloom,
Sonorous as with all the spheres in chime
Heard far through flowering heaven: the sea, sublime
Once only with its own
Old winds' and waters' tone,
Sad only or glad with its own glory, and crowned
With its own light, and thrilled with its own sound,
Learnt now their song, more sweet than heaven's may be,
Who pass away by sea;
The song that takes of old love's land farewell,
With pulse of plangent water like a knell.

And louder ever and louder and yet more loud
Till night be shamed of morn [*Ant.* 7.
Rings the Black Huntsman's horn
Through darkening deeps beneath the covering cloud,
Till all the wild beasts of the darkness hear;
Till the Czar quake, till Austria cower for fear,

Till the king breathe not, till the priest wax pale,
Till spies and slayers on seats of judgment quail,
Till mitre and cowl bow down
And crumble as a crown,
Till Cæsar driven to lair and hounded Pope
Reel breathless and drop heartless out of hope,
And one the uncleanest kinless beast of all
Lower than his fortune fall;
The wolfish waif of casual empire, born
To turn all hate and horror cold with scorn.

[*Ep.* 7.

Yea, even at night's full noon
Light's birth-song brake in tune,
Spake, witnessing that with us one must be,
God; naming so by name
That priests have brought to shame
The strength whose scourge sounds on the smitten sea;
The mystery manifold of might
Which bids the wind give back to night the things of night.

[*Str.* 8.

Even God, the unknown of all time; force or thought,
Nature or fate or will,
Clothed round with good and ill,
Veiled and revealed of all things and of nought,
Hooded and helmed with mystery, girt and shod
With light and darkness, unapparent God.
Him the high prophet o'er his wild work bent
Found indivisible ever and immanent
At hidden heart of truth,
In forms of age and youth
Transformed and transient ever; masked and crowned,

From all bonds loosened and with all bonds bound,
Diverse and one with all things; love and hate,
Earth, and the starry state
Of heaven immeasurable, and years that flee
As clouds and winds and rays across the sea.

But higher than stars and deeper than the waves
Of day and night and morrow [*Ant.* 8.
That roll for all time, sorrow
Keeps ageless watch over perpetual graves.
From dawn to morning of the soul in flower,
Through toils and dreams and visions, to that hour
When all the deeps were opened, and one doom
Took two sweet lives to embrace them and entomb,
The strong song plies its wing
That makes the darkness ring
And the deep light reverberate sound as deep;
Song soft as flowers or grass more soft than sleep,
Song bright as heaven above the mounting bird,
Song like a God's tears heard
Falling, fulfilled of life and death and light,
And all the stars and all the shadow of night.

Till, when its flight hath past [*Ep.* 8.
Time's loftiest mark and last,
The goal where good kills evil with a kiss,
And Darkness in God's sight
Grows as his brother Light,
And heaven and hell one heart whence all the abyss
Throbs with love's music; from his trance
Love waking leads it home to her who stayed in France.

But now from all the world-old winds of the air [*Str.* 9.
One blast of record rings
As from time's hidden springs
With roar of rushing wings and fires that bear
Toward north and south sonorous, east and west,
Forth of the dark wherein its records rest,
The story told of the ages, writ nor sung
By man's hand ever nor by mortal tongue
Till, godlike with desire,
One tongue of man took fire,
One hand laid hold upon the lightning, one
Rose up to bear time witness what the sun
Had seen, and what the moon and stars of night
Beholding lost not light :
From dawn to dusk what ways man wandering trod
Even through the twilight of the gods to God.

From dawn of man and woman twain and one [*Ant.* 9.
When the earliest dews impearled
The front of all the world
Ringed with aurorean aureole of the sun,
To days that saw Christ's tears and hallowing breath
Put life for love's sake in the lips of death,
And years as waves whose brine was fire, whose foam
Blood, and the ravage of Neronian Rome ;
And the eastern crescent's horn
Mightier awhile than morn ;
And knights whose lives were flights of eagles' wings,
And lives like snakes' lives of engendering kings ;
And all the ravin of all the swords that reap
Lives cast as sheaves on heap
From all the billowing harvest-fields of fight ;
And sounds of love-songs lovelier than the light.

The grim dim thrones of the east [*Ep.* 9.
Set for death's riotous feast
Round the bright board where darkling centuries wait,
And servile slaughter, mute,
Feeds power with fresh red fruit,
Glitter and groan with mortal food of fate ;
And throne and cup and lamp's bright breath
Bear witness to their lord of only night and death.

Dead freedom by live empire lies defiled, [*Str.* 10.
And murder at his feet
Plies lust with wine and meat,
With offering of an old man and a child,
With holy body and blood, inexpiable
Communion in the sacrament of hell,
Till, reeking from their monstrous eucharist,
The lips wax cold that murdered where they kissed,
And empire in mid feast
Fall as a slaughtered beast
Headless, and ease men's hungering hearts of fear
Lest God were none in heaven, to see nor hear,
And purge his own pollution with the flood
Poured of his black base blood
So first found healing, poisonous as it poured ;
And on the clouds the archangel cleanse his sword.

As at the word unutterable that made [*Ant.* 10.
Of day and night division,
From vision on to vision,
From dream to dream, from darkness into shade,
From sunshine into sunlight, moves and lives
The steersman's eye, the helming hand that gives

Life to the wheels and wings that whirl along
The immeasurable impulse of the sphere of song
Through all the eternal years,
Beyond all stars and spheres,
Beyond the washing of the waves of time,
Beyond all heights where no thought else may climb,
Beyond the darkling dust of suns that were,
Past height and depth of air ;
And in the abyss whence all things move that are
Finds only living Love, the sovereign star.

[*Ep.* 10.

Nor less the weight and worth
Found even of love on earth
To wash all stain of tears and sins away,
On dying lips alit
That living knew not it,
In the winged shape of song with death to play:
To warm young children with its wings,
And try with fire the heart elect for godlike things.

[*Str.* 11.

For all worst wants of all most miserable
With divine hands to deal
All balms and herbs that heal,
Among all woes whereunder poor men dwell
Our Master sent his servant Love, to be
On earth his witness ; but the strange deep sea,
Mother of life and death inextricate,
What work should Love do there, to war with fate?
Yet there must Love too keep
At heart of the eyeless deep
Watch, and wage war wide-eyed with all its wonders,
Lower than the lightnings of its waves, and thunders

Of seas less monstrous than the births they bred;
Keep high there heart and head,
And conquer: then for prize of all toils past
Feel the sea close them in again at last.

A day of direr doom arisen thereafter [*Ant.* II.
With cloud and fire in strife
Lightens and darkens life
Round one by man's hand masked with living laughter,
A man by men bemonstered, but by love,
Watched with blind eyes as of a wakeful dove,
And wooed by lust, that in her rosy den
As fire on flesh feeds on the souls of men,
To take the intense impure
Burnt-offering of her lure,
Divine and dark and bright and naked, strange
With ravenous thirst of life reversed and change,
As though the very heaven should shrivel and swell
With hunger after hell,
Run mad for dear damnation, and desire
To feel its light thrilled through with stings of fire.

Above a windier sea, [*Ep.* II.
The glory of Ninety-three
Fills heaven with blood-red and with rose-red beams
That earth beholding grows
Herself one burning rose
Flagrant and fragrant with strange deeds and dreams,
Dreams dyed as love's own flower, and deeds
Stained as with love's own life-blood, that for love's sake bleeds.

And deeper than all deeps of seas and skies [*Str.* 12.
Wherein the shadows are
Called sun and moon and star
That rapt conjecture metes with mounting eyes,
Loud with strange waves and lustrous with new spheres,
Shines, masked at once and manifest of years,
Shakespeare, a heaven of heavenly eyes beholden ;
And forward years as backward years grow golden
With light of deeds and words
And flight of God's fleet birds,
Angels of wrath and love and truth and pity ;
And higher on exiled eyes their natural city
Dawns down the depths of vision, more sublime
Than all truths born of time ;
And eyes that wept above two dear sons dead
Grow saving stars to guard one hopeless head.

Bright round the brows of banished age had shone [*Ant.* 12.
In vision flushed with truth
The rosy glory of youth
On streets and woodlands where in days long gone
Sweet love sang light and loud and deep and dear :
And far the trumpets of the dreadful year
Had pealed and wailed in darkness : last arose
The song of children, kindling as a rose
At breath of sunrise, born
Of the red flower of morn
Whose face perfumes deep heaven with odorous light
And thrills all through the wings of souls in flight
Close as the press of children at His knee
Whom if the high priest see,

Dreaming, as homeless on dark earth he trod,
The lips that praise him shall not know for God.

O sovereign spirit, above [*Ep.* 12.
All offering but man's love,
All praise and prayer and incense undefiled!
The one thing stronger found
Than towers with iron bound;
The one thing lovelier than a little child,
And deeper than the seas are deep,
And tenderer than such tears of love as angels weep.

Dante, the seer of all things evil and good, [*Str.* 13.
Beheld two ladies, Beauty
And high life-hallowing Duty,
That strove for sway upon his mind and mood
And held him in alternating accord
Fast bound at feet of either: but our lord,
The seer and singer of righteousness and wrong
Who stands now master of all the keys of song,
Sees both as dewdrops run
Together in the sun,
For him not twain but one thing twice divine;
Even as his speech and song are bread and wine
For all souls hungering and all hearts athirst
At best of days and worst,
And both one sacrament of Love's great giving
To feed the spirit and sense of all souls living.

The seventh day in the wind's month, ten years gone [*Ant.* 13.
Since heaven-espousing earth
Gave the Republic birth,
The mightiest soul put mortal raiment on

That came forth singing ever in man's ears
Of all souls with us, and through all these years
Rings yet the lordliest, waxen yet more strong,
That on our souls hath shed itself in song,
Poured forth itself like rain
On souls like springing grain
That with its procreant beams and showers were fed
For living wine and sacramental bread ;
Given all itself as air gives life and light,
Utterly, as of right ;
The goodliest gift our age hath given, to be
Ours, while the sun gives glory to the sea.

Our Father and Master and Lord, [*Ep.* 13.
Who hast thy song for sword,
For staff thy spirit, and our hearts for throne ;
As in past years of wrong,
Take now my subject song,
To no crowned head made humble but thine own ;
That on thy day of worldly birth
Gives thanks for all thou hast given past thanks of all on earth.

NOTES

7. 33. *Odes et Ballades*, 1822-1824.
57. *Les Orientales*, 1829.
69. *Les Feuilles d'Automne*, 1831.
71. *Les Chants du Crépuscule*, 1835.
73. *Les Voix Intérieures*, 1837.
81. *Les Rayons et les Ombres*, 1840.
101. *Hernani*, 1830.
105. *Marion de Lorme*, 1831.
109. *Le Roi s'amuse*, 1832.
113. *Lucrèce Borgia*, 1833.
121. *Marie Tudor*, 1835.
127. *Angelo, Tyran de Padoue*, 1835.
129. *La Esmeralda*, 1836.
133. *Ruy Blas*, 1838.
137. *Les Burgraves*, 1842.
153. *Cromwell*, 1827: *Étude sur Mirabeau*, 1834 (*Littérature et Philosophie mêlées*, 1819-1834).
177. *Han d'Islande*, 1823. *Bug-Jargal*, 1826.
182. *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné*, 1829: *Claude Gueux*, 1834.
193. *Notre-Dame de Paris*, 1831.
205. *Le Rhin*, 1845.
216. *Napoléon le Petit*, 1852. *Châtiments*, 1853. *Histoire d'un Crime*, 1877. In this place I must take occasion to relieve my conscience from a sense of duty unfulfilled so long as I for one have not uttered my own poor private protest—worthless and weightless though it may seem, if cast as a grain into the scale of public opinion—against a projected insult at once to contemporary France and to the present only less than to past generations of Englishmen.

On the proposed desecration of Westminster Abbey by the erection of a monument to the son of Napoleon III

"Let us go hence." From the inmost shrine of grace
Where England holds the elect of all her dead
There comes a word like one of old time said
By gods of old cast out. Here is no place
At once for these and one of poisonous race.
Let each rise up from his dishallowed bed
And pass forth silent. Each divine veiled head
Shall speak in silence with averted face.
"Scorn everlasting and eternal shame
Eat out the rotting record of his name
Who had the glory of all these graves in trust
And turned it to a hissing. His offence
Makes havoc of their desecrated dust
Whose place is here no more. Let us go hence."

Feb. 25, 1880.

v. 297. *Les Contemplations*, 1856.
321. *La Légende des Siècles. Première série*, 1859; *nouvelle série*, 1877.
392. *Les Misérables*, 1862.
409. *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*, 1866.
417. *L'Homme qui Rit*, 1869.
433. *Quatre-vingt-treize*, 1874.
441. *William Shakespeare*, 1864.
448. *Actes et Paroles; Avant l'Exil*, 1841–1851; *Pendant l'Exil*, 1852–1870; *Depuis l'Exil*, 1870–1876.
452. *Paris*, 1867.
455. *Mes Fils*, 1875.
456. *Pour un Soldat*, 1875.
457. *Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois*, 1865.
462. *L'Année Terrible*, 1872.
464. *L'Art d'être Grandpère*, 1877.
470. *Le Pape*, 1878.
497. "Septidi ventôse an X de la République (26 février 1802)." *Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie*, 1863, *tome* I, *p.* 28.

At the end of such a list, so incomparable as to seem incredible, of one great man's good works, we may be forgiven the alteration of a word even in a verse from Æschylus which we cannot choose but apply once more to this leader in the advance of men made perfect through doom of trial and long wayfaring, whose progress he furthers by example and stimulates by song:—

κύριός ἐστι θροεῖν ὄδιον κράτος αἴσιον ἀνδρῶν
ἐκτελέων· ἔτι γὰρ θεόθεν καταπνείει
πειθὼ μολπᾶν
ἀλκᾷ σύμφυτος αἰών.

Æsch. *Agam.* 104–8.

DEDICATION

TO

JOSEPH MAZZINI

TAKE, since you bade it should bear,
These, of the seed of your sowing,
Blossom or berry or weed.
Sweet though they be not, or fair,
That the dew of your word kept growing,
Sweet at least was the seed.

Men bring you love-offerings of tears,
And sorrow the kiss that assuages,
And slaves the hate-offering of wrongs,
And time the thanksgiving of years,
And years the thanksgiving of ages;
I bring you my handful of songs.

If a perfume be left, if a bloom,
Let it live till Italia be risen,
To be strewn in the dust of her car
When her voice shall awake from the tomb
England, and France from her prison,
Sisters, a star by a star.

I bring you the sword of a song,
The sword of my spirit's desire,
Feeble ; but laid at your feet,
That which was weak shall be strong,
That which was cold shall take fire,
That which was bitter be sweet.

It was wrought not with hands to smite,
Nor hewn after swordsmiths' fashion,
Nor tempered on anvil of steel ;
But with visions and dreams of the night,
But with hope, and the patience of passion,
And the signet of love for a seal.

Be it witness, till one more strong,
Till a loftier lyre, till a rarer
Lute praise her better than I,
Be it witness before you, my song,
That I knew her, the world's banner-bearer,
Who shall cry the republican cry.

Yea, even she as at first,
Yea, she alone and none other,
Shall cast down, shall build up, shall bring home ;
Slake earth's hunger and thirst,
Lighten, and lead as a mother ;
First name of the world's names, Rome.

SONGS BEFORE SUNRISE

PRELUDE

Between the green bud and the red
Youth sat and sang by Time, and shed
From eyes and tresses flowers and tears,
From heart and spirit hopes and fears,
Upon the hollow stream whose bed
Is channelled by the foamless years;
And with the white the gold-haired head
Mixed running locks, and in Time's ears
Youth's dreams hung singing, and Time's truth
Was half not harsh in the ears of Youth.

Between the bud and the blown flower
Youth talked with joy and grief an hour,
With footless joy and wingless grief
And twin-born faith and disbelief
Who share the seasons to devour;
And long ere these made up their sheaf
Felt the winds round him shake and shower
The rose-red and the blood-red leaf,
Delight whose germ grew never grain,
And passion dyed in its own pain.

Then he stood up, and trod to dust
Fear and desire, mistrust and trust,
And dreams of bitter sleep and sweet,
And bound for sandals on his feet

Knowledge and patience of what must
And what things may be, in the heat
And cold of years that rot and rust
And alter; and his spirit's meat
Was freedom, and his staff was wrought
Of strength, and his cloak woven of thought.

For what has he whose will sees clear
To do with doubt and faith and fear,
Swift hopes and slow despondencies?
His heart is equal with the sea's
And with the sea-wind's, and his ear
Is level to the speech of these,
And his soul communes and takes cheer
With the actual earth's equalities,
Air, light, and night, hills, winds, and streams,
And seeks not strength from strengthless dreams.

His soul is even with the sun
Whose spirit and whose eye are one,
Who seeks not stars by day, nor light
And heavy heat of day by night.
Him can no God cast down, whom none
Can lift in hope beyond the height
Of fate and nature and things done
By the calm rule of might and right
That bids men be and bear and do,
And die beneath blind skies or blue.

To him the lights of even and morn
Speak no vain things of love or scorn,
Fancies and passions miscreate
By man in things dispassionate.

Nor holds he fellowship forlorn
With souls that pray and hope and hate,
And doubt they had better not been born,
And fain would lure or scare off fate
And charm their doomsman from their doom
And make fear dig its own false tomb.

He builds not half of doubts and half
Of dreams his own soul's cenotaph,
Whence hopes and fears with helpless eyes,
Wrapt loose in cast-off cerecloths, rise
And dance and wring their hands and laugh,
And weep thin tears and sigh light sighs,
And without living lips would quaff
The living spring in man that lies,
And drain his soul of faith and strength
It might have lived on a life's length.

He hath given himself and hath not sold
To God for heaven or man for gold,
Or grief for comfort that it gives,
Or joy for grief's restoratives.
He hath given himself to time, whose fold
Shuts in the mortal flock that lives
On its plain pasture's heat and cold
And the equal year's alternatives.
Earth, heaven, and time, death, life, and he,
Endure while they shall be to be.

"Yet between death and life are hours
To flush with love and hide in flowers;
What profit save in these?" men cry:
"Ah, see, between soft earth and sky,

What only good things here are ours!"
They say, "what better wouldst thou try,
What sweeter sing of? or what powers
Serve, that will give thee ere thou die
More joy to sing and be less sad,
More heart to play and grow more glad?"

Play then and sing; we too have played,
We likewise, in that subtle shade.
We too have twisted through our hair
Such tendrils as the wild Loves wear,
And heard what mirth the Mænads made,
Till the wind blew our garlands bare
And left their roses disarrayed,
And smote the summer with strange air,
And disengirdled and discrowned
The limbs and locks that vine-wreaths bound.

We too have tracked by star-proof trees
The tempest of the Thyiades
Scare the loud night on hills that hid
The blood-feasts of the Bassarid,
Heard their song's iron cadences
Fright the wolf hungering from the kid,
Outroar the lion-throated seas,
Outchide the north-wind if it chid,
And hush the torrent-tongued ravines
With thunders of their tambourines.

But the fierce flute whose notes acclaim
Dim goddesses of fiery fame,
Cymbal and clamorous kettledrum,
Timbrels and tabrets, all are dumb

That turned the high chill air to flame ;
  The singing tongues of fire are numb
That called on Cotys by her name
  Edonian, till they felt her come
And maddened, and her mystic face
Lightened along the streams of Thrace.

For Pleasure slumberless and pale,
And Passion with rejected veil,
  Pass, and the tempest-footed throng
  Of hours that follow them with song
Till their feet flag and voices fail,
  And lips that were so loud so long
Learn silence, or a wearier wail ;
  So keen is change, and time so strong,
To weave the robes of life and rend
And weave again till life have end.

But weak is change, but strengthless time,
To take the light from heaven, or climb
  The hills of heaven with wasting feet.
  Songs they can stop that earth found meet,
But the stars keep their ageless rhyme ;
  Flowers they can slay that spring thought sweet,
But the stars keep their spring sublime ;
  Passions and pleasures can defeat,
Actions and agonies control,
And life and death, but not the soul.

Because man's soul is man's God still,
What wind soever waft his will
  Across the waves of day and night
  To port or shipwreck, left or right,

By shores and shoals of good and ill;
And still its flame at mainmast height
Through the rent air that foam-flakes fill
Sustains the indomitable light
Whence only man hath strength to steer
Or helm to handle without fear.

Save his own soul's light overhead,
None leads him, and none ever led,
Across birth's hidden harbour-bar,
Past youth where shoreward shallows are,
Through age that drives on toward the red
Vast void of sunset hailed from far,
To the equal waters of the dead;
Save his own soul he hath no star,
And sinks, except his own soul guide,
Helmless in middle turn of tide.

No blast of air or fire of sun
Puts out the light whereby we run
With girded loins our lamplit race,
And each from each takes heart of grace
And spirit till his turn be done,
And light of face from each man's face
In whom the light of trust is one;
Since only souls that keep their place
By their own light, and watch things roll,
And stand, have light for any soul.

A little time we gain from time
To set our seasons in some chime,
For harsh or sweet or loud or low,
With seasons played out long ago

And souls that in their time and prime
  Took part with summer or with snow.
Lived abject lives out or sublime,
  And had their chance of seed to sow
For service or disservice done
To those days dead and this their son.

A little time that we may fill
Or with such good works or such ill
  As loose the bonds or make them strong
  Wherein all manhood suffers wrong.
By rose-hung river and light-foot rill
  There are who rest not ; who think long
Till they discern as from a hill
  At the sun's hour of morning song,
Known of souls only, and those souls free,
The sacred spaces of the sea.

THE EVE OF REVOLUTION

1

THE trumpets of the four winds of the world
From the ends of the earth blow battle; the night heaves,
With breasts palpitating and wings refurled,
With passion of couched limbs, as one who grieves
Sleeping, and in her sleep she sees uncurled
Dreams serpent-shapen, such as sickness weaves,
Down the wild wind of vision caught and whirled,
Dead leaves of sleep, thicker than autumn leaves,
Shadows of storm-shaped things,
Flights of dim tribes of kings,
The reaping men that reap men for their sheaves,
And, without grain to yield,
Their scythe-swept harvest-field
Thronged thick with men pursuing and fugitives,
Dead foliage of the tree of sleep,
Leaves blood-coloured and golden, blown from deep to deep.

2

I hear the midnight on the mountains cry
With many tongues of thunders, and I hear
Sound and resound the hollow shield of sky
With trumpet-throated winds that charge and cheer,

And through the roar of the hours that fighting fly,
Through flight and fight and all the fluctuant fear,
A sound sublimer than the heavens are high,
A voice more instant than the winds are clear,
Say to my spirit, "Take
Thy trumpet too, and make
A rallying music in the void night's ear,
Till the storm lose its track,
And all the night go back;
Till, as through sleep false life knows true life near,
Thou know the morning through the night,
And through the thunder silence, and through darkness light."

3

I set the trumpet to my lips and blow.
The height of night is shaken, the skies break,
The winds and stars and waters come and go
By fits of breath and light and sound, that wake
As out of sleep, and perish as the show
Built up of sleep, when all her strengths forsake
The sense-compelling spirit; the depths glow,
The heights flash, and the roots and summits shake
Of earth in all her mountains,
And the inner foamless fountains
And wellsprings of her fast-bound forces quake;
Yea, the whole air of life
Is set on fire of strife,
Till change unmake things made and love remake;
Reason and love, whose names are one,
Seeing reason is the sunlight shed from love the sun.

4

The night is broken eastward ; is it day,
Or but the watchfires trembling here and there,
Like hopes on memory's devastated way,
In moonless wastes of planet-stricken air ?
O many-childed mother great and grey,
O multitudinous bosom, and breasts that bare
Our fathers' generations, whereat lay
The weanling peoples and the tribes that were,
Whose new-born mouths long dead
Those ninefold nipples fed,
Dim face with deathless eyes and withered hair,
Fostress of obscure lands,
Whose multiplying hands
Wove the world's web with divers races fair
And cast it waif-wise on the stream,
The waters of the centuries, where thou sat'st to dream ;

5

O many-minded mother and visionary,
Asia, that sawest their westering waters sweep
With all the ships and spoils of time to carry
And all the fears and hopes of life to keep,
Thy vesture wrought of ages legendary
Hides usward thine impenetrable sleep,
And thy veiled head, night's oldest tributary,
We know not if it speak or smile or weep.
But where for us began
The first live light of man

And first-born fire of deeds to burn and leap,
The first war fair as peace
To shine and lighten Greece,
And the first freedom moved upon the deep,
God's breath upon the face of time
Moving, a present spirit, seen of men sublime;

6

There where our east looks always to thy west,
Our mornings to thine evenings, Greece to thee,
These lights that catch the mountains crest by crest,
Are they of stars or beacons that we see?
Taygetus takes here the winds abreast,
And there the sun resumes Thermopylæ;
The light is Athens where those remnants rest,
And Salamis the sea-wall of that sea.
The grass men tread upon
Is very Marathon,
The leaves are of that time-unstricken tree
That storm nor sun can fret
Nor wind, since she that set
Made it her sign to men whose shield was she;
Here, as dead time his deathless things,
Eurotas and Cephisus keep their sleepless springs.

7

O hills of Crete, are these things dead? O waves,
O many-mouthèd streams, are these springs dry?
Earth, dost thou feed and hide now none but slaves?
Heaven, hast thou heard of men that would not die?

Is the land thick with only such men's graves
As were ashamed to look upon the sky?
Ye dead, whose name outfaces and outbraves
Death, is the seed of such as you gone by?
Sea, have thy ports not heard
Some Marathonian word
Rise up to landward and to Godward fly?
No thunder, that the skies
Sent not upon us, rise
With fire and earthquake and a cleaving cry?
Nay, light is here, and shall be light,
Though all the face of the hour be overborne with night.

8

I set the trumpet to my lips and blow.
The night is broken northward; the pale plains
And footless fields of sun-forgotten snow
Feel through their creviced lips and iron veins
Such quick breath labour and such clean blood flow
As summer-stricken spring feels in her pains
When dying May bears June, too young to know
The fruit that waxes from the flower that wanes;
Strange tyrannies and vast,
Tribes frost-bound to their past,
Lands that are loud all through their length with chains,
Wastes where the wind's wings break,
Displumed by daylong ache
And anguish of blind snows and rack-blown rains,
And ice that seals the White Sea's lips,
Whose monstrous weights crush flat the sides of shrieking ships;

9

Horrible sights and sounds of the unreached pole,
And shrill fierce climes of inconsolable air,
Shining below the beamless aureole
That hangs about the north-wind's hurtling hair,
A comet-lighted lamp, sublime and sole
Dawn of the dayless heaven where suns despair;
Earth, skies, and waters, smitten into soul,
Feel the hard veil that iron centuries wear
Rent as with hands in sunder,
Such hands as make the thunder
And clothe with form all substance and strip bare;
Shapes, shadows, sounds and lights
Of their dead days and nights
Take soul of life too keen for death to bear;
Life, conscience, forethought, will, desire,
Flood men's inanimate eyes and dry-drawn hearts with fire.

10

Light, light, and light! to break and melt in sunder
All clouds and chains that in one bondage bind
Eyes, hands, and spirits, forged by fear and wonder
And sleek fierce fraud with hidden knife behind;
There goes no fire from heaven before their thunder,
Nor are the links not malleable that wind
Round the snared limbs and souls that ache thereunder;
The hands are mighty, were the head not blind.
Priest is the staff of king,
And chains and clouds one thing,
And fettered flesh with devastated mind.
Open thy soul to see,
Slave, and thy feet are free;
Thy bonds and thy beliefs are one in kind,

And of thy fears thine irons wrought
Hang weights upon thee fashioned out of thine own thought.

11

O soul, O God, O glory of liberty,
To night and day their lightning and their light!
With heat of heart thou kindlest the quick sea,
And the dead earth takes spirit from thy sight;
The natural body of things is warm with thee,
And the world's weakness parcel of thy might;
Thou seest us feeble and forceless, fit to be
Slaves of the years that drive us left and right,
Drowned under hours like waves
Wherethrough we row like slaves;
But if thy finger touch us, these take flight.
If but one sovereign word
Of thy live lips be heard,
What man shall stop us, and what God shall smite?
Do thou but look in our dead eyes,
They are stars that light each other till thy sundawn rise.

12

Thou art the eye of this blind body of man,
The tongue of this dumb people; shalt thou not
See, shalt thou speak not for them? Time is wan
And hope is weak with waiting, and swift thought
Hath lost the wings at heel wherewith he ran,
And on the red pit's edge sits down distraught
To talk with death of days republican
And dreams and fights long since dreamt out and fought;

Of the last hope that drew
To that red edge anew
The firewhite faith of Poland without spot;
Of the blind Russian might,
And fire that is not light;
Of the green Rhineland where thy spirit wrought;
But though time, hope, and memory tire,
Canst thou wax dark as they do, thou whose light is fire?

13

I set the trumpet to my lips and blow.
The night is broken westward; the wide sea
That makes immortal motion to and fro
From world's end unto world's end, and shall be
When nought now grafted of men's hands shall grow
And as the weed in last year's waves are we
Or spray the sea-wind shook a year ago
From its sharp tresses down the storm to lee,
The moving god that hides
Time in its timeless tides
Wherein time dead seems live eternity,
That breaks and makes again
Much mightier things than men,
Doth it not hear change coming, or not see?
Are the deeps deaf and dead and blind,
To catch no light or sound from landward of mankind?

14

O thou, clothed round with raiment of white waves,
Thy brave brows lightening through the grey wet air,
Thou, lulled with sea-sounds of a thousand caves,
And lit with sea-shine to thine inland lair,

Whose freedom clothed the naked souls of slaves
And stripped the muffled souls of tyrants bare,
O, by the centuries of thy glorious graves,
By the live light of the earth that was thy care,
Live, thou must not be dead,
Live ; let thine armèd head
Lift itself up to sunward and the fair
Daylight of time and man,
Thine head republican,
With the same splendour on thine helmless hair
That in his eyes kept up a light
Who on thy glory gazed away their sacred sight ;

15

Who loved and looked their sense to death on thee ;
Who taught thy lips imperishable things,
And in thine ears outsang thy singing sea ;
Who made thy foot firm on the necks of kings
And thy soul somewhile steadfast—woe are we
It was but for a while, and all the strings
Were broken of thy spirit ; yet had he
Set to such tunes and clothed it with such wings
It seemed for his sole sake
Impossible to break,
And woundless of the worm that waits and stings,
The golden-headed worm
Made headless for a term,
The king-snake whose life kindles with the spring's,
To breathe his soul upon her bloom,
And while she marks not turn her temple to her tomb.

16

By those eyes blinded and that heavenly head
And the secluded soul adorable,
O Milton's land, what ails thee to be dead?
Thine ears are yet sonorous with his shell
That all the songs of all thy sea-line fed
With motive sound of spring-tides at mid swell,
And through thine heart his thought as blood is shed,
Requickening thee with wisdom to do well;
Such sons were of thy womb,
England, for love of whom
Thy name is not yet writ with theirs that fell,
But, till thou quite forget
What were thy children, yet
On the pale lips of hope is as a spell;
And Shelley's heart and Landor's mind
Lit thee with latter watch-fires; why wilt thou be blind?

17

Though all were else indifferent, all that live
Spiritless shapes of nations; though time wait
In vain on hope till these have help to give,
And faith and love crawl famished from the gate;
Canst thou sit shamed and self-contemplative
With soulless eyes on thy secluded fate?
Though time forgive them, thee shall he forgive,
Whose choice was in thine hand to be so great?
Who cast out of thy mind
The passion of man's kind,
And made thee and thine old name separate?
Now when time looks to see
New names and old and thee

Build up our one Republic state by state,
England with France, and France with Spain,
And Spain with sovereign Italy strike hands and reign.

18

O known and unknown fountain-heads that fill
Our dear life-springs of England! O bright race
Of streams and waters that bear witness still
To the earth her sons were made of! O fair face
Of England, watched of eyes death cannot kill,
How should the soul that lit you for a space
Fall through sick weakness of a broken will
To the dead cold damnation of disgrace?
Such wind of memory stirs
On all green hills of hers,
Such breath of record from so high a place,
From years whose tongues of flame
Prophesied in her name
Her feet should keep truth's bright and burning trace,
We needs must have her heart with us,
Whose hearts are one with man's; she must be dead or thus.

19

Who is against us? who is on our side?
Whose heart of all men's hearts is one with man's?
Where art thou that wast prophetess and bride,
When truth and thou trod under time and chance?
What latter light of what new hope shall guide
Out of the snares of hell thy feet, O France?

What heel shall bruise these heads that hiss and glide,
What wind blow out these fen-born fires that dance
Before thee to thy death?
No light, no life, no breath,
From thy dead eyes and lips shall take the trance,
Till on that deadliest crime
Reddening the feet of time
Who treads through blood and passes, time shall glance
Pardon, and Italy forgive,
And Rome arise up whom thou slewest, and bid thee live.

20

I set the trumpet to my lips and blow.
The night is broken southward; the springs run,
The daysprings and the watersprings that flow
Forth with one will from where their source was one,
Out of the might of morning: high and low,
The hungering hills feed full upon the sun,
The thirsting valleys drink of him and glow
As a heart burns with some divine thing done,
Or as blood burns again
In the bruised heart of Spain,
A rose renewed with red new life begun,
Dragged down with thorns and briers,
That puts forth buds like fires
Till the whole tree take flower in unison,
And prince that clogs and priest that clings
Be cast as weeds upon the dunghill of dead things.

21

Ah heaven, bow down, be nearer! This is she,
Italia, the world's wonder, the world's care,
Free in her heart ere quite her hands be free,
And lovelier than her loveliest robe of air.
The earth hath voice, and speech is in the sea,
Sounds of great joy, too beautiful to bear;
All things are glad because of her, but we
Most glad, who loved her when the worst days were.
O sweetest, fairest, first,
O flower, when times were worst,
Thou hadst no stripe wherein we had no share.
Have not our hearts held close,
Kept fast the whole world's rose?
Have we not worn thee at heart whom none would wear?
First love and last love, light of lands,
Shall we not touch thee full-blown with our lips and hands?

22

O too much loved, what shall we say of thee?
What shall we make of our heart's burning fire,
The passion in our lives that fain would be
Made each a brand to pile into the pyre
That shall burn up thy foemen, and set free
The flame whence thy sun-shadowing wings aspire?
Love of our life, what more than men are we,
That this our breath for thy sake should expire,
For whom to joyous death
Glad gods might yield their breath,

Great gods drop down from heaven to serve for hire?
We are but men, are we,
And thou art Italy;
What shall we do for thee with our desire?
What gift shall we deserve to give?
How shall we die to do thee service, or how live?

23

The very thought in us how much we love thee
Makes the throat sob with love and blinds the eyes.
How should love bear thee, to behold above thee
His own light burning from reverberate skies?
They give thee light, but the light given them of thee
Makes faint the wheeling fires that fall and rise.
What love, what life, what death of man's should move thee,
What face that lingers or what foot that flies?
It is not heaven that lights
Thee with such days and nights,
But thou that heaven is lit from in such wise.
O thou her dearest birth,
Turn thee to lighten earth,
Earth too that bore thee and yearns to thee and cries;
Stand up, shine, lighten, become flame,
Till as the sun's name through all nations be thy name.

24

I take the trumpet from my lips and sing.
O life immeasurable and imminent love,
And fear like winter leading hope like spring,
Whose flower-bright brows the day-star sits above,

Whose hand unweariable and untiring wing
Strike music from a world that wailed and strove,
Each bright soul born and every glorious thing,
From very freedom to man's joy thereof,
O time, O change and death,
Whose now not hateful breath
But gives the music swifter feet to move
Through sharp remeasuring tones
Of refluent antiphones
More tender-tuned than heart or throat of dove,
Soul into soul, song into song,
Life changing into life, by laws that work not wrong ;

25

O natural force in spirit and sense, that art
One thing in all things, fruit of thine own fruit,
O thought illimitable and infinite heart
Whose blood is life in limbs indissolute
That still keeps hurtless thine invisible part
And inextirpable thy viewless root
Whence all sweet shafts of green and each thy dart
Of sharpening leaf and bud resundering shoot ;
Hills that the day-star hails,
Heights that the first beam scales,
And heights that souls outshining suns salute,
Valleys for each mouth born
Free now of plenteous corn,
Waters and woodlands musical or mute ;
Free winds that brighten brows as free,
And thunder and laughter and lightning of the sovereign sea ;

26

Rivers and springs, and storms that seek your prey;
With strong wings ravening through the skies by night;
Spirits and stars that hold one choral way;
O light of heaven, and thou the heavenlier light
Aflame above the souls of men that sway
All generations of all years with might;
O sunrise of the repossessing day,
And sunrise of all-renovating right;
And thou, whose trackless foot
Mocks hope's or fear's pursuit,
Swift Revolution, changing depth with height;
And thou, whose mouth makes one
All songs that seek the sun,
Serene Republic of a world made white;
Thou, Freedom, whence the soul's springs ran;
Praise earth for man's sake living, and for earth's sake man.

27

Make yourselves wings, O tarrying feet of fate,
And hidden hour that hast our hope to bear,
A child-god, through the morning-coloured gate
That lets love in upon the golden air,
Dead on whose threshold lies heart-broken hate,
Dead discord, dead injustice, dead despair;
O love long looked for, wherefore wilt thou wait,
And shew not yet the dawn on thy bright hair.
Not yet thine hand released
Refreshing the faint east,

Thine hand reconquering heaven, to seat man there:
Come forth, be born and live,
Thou that hast help to give
And light to make man's day of manhood fair:
With flight outflying the spherèd sun,
Hasten thine hour and halt not, till thy work be done.

A WATCH IN THE NIGHT

1

Watchman, what of the night?—
  Storm and thunder and rain,
  Lights that waver and wane,
Leaving the watchfires unlit.
Only the balefires are bright,
  And the flash of the lamps now and then
From a palace where spoilers sit,
  Trampling the children of men.

2

Prophet, what of the night?—
  I stand by the verge of the sea,
  Banished, uncomforted, free,
Hearing the noise of the waves
And sudden flashes that smite
  Some man's tyrannous head,
Thundering, heard among graves
  That hide the hosts of his dead.

3

Mourners, what of the night?—
All night through without sleep
We weep, and we weep, and we weep.
Who shall give us our sons?
Beaks of raven and kite,
Mouths of wolf and of hound,
Give us them back whom the guns
Shot for you dead on the ground.

4

Dead men, what of the night?—
Cannon and scaffold and sword,
Horror of gibbet and cord,
Mowed us as sheaves for the grave,
Mowed us down for the right.
We do not grudge or repent.
Freely to freedom we gave
Pledges, till life should be spent.

5

Statesman, what of the night?—
The night will last me my time.
The gold on a crown or a crime
Looks well enough yet by the lamps.
Have we not fingers to write,
Lips to swear at a need?
Then, when danger decamps,
Bury the word with the deed.

6

Warrior, what of the night?—
  Whether it be not or be
  Night, is as one thing to me.
I for one, at the least,
Ask not of dews if they blight,
  Ask not of flames if they slay,
Ask not of prince or of priest
  How long ere we put them away.

7

Master, what of the night?—
  Child, night is not at all
  Anywhere, fallen or to fall,
Save in our star-stricken eyes.
Forth of our eyes it takes flight,
  Look we but once nor before
Nor behind us, but straight on the skies;
  Night is not then any more.

8

Exile, what of the night?—
  The tides and the hours run out,
  The seasons of death and of doubt,
The night-watches bitter and sore.
In the quicksands leftward and right
  My feet sink down under me;
But I know the scents of the shore
  And the broad blown breaths of the sea.

9

Captives, what of the night?—
  It rains outside overhead
  Always, a rain that is red,
And our faces are soiled with the rain.
Here in the seasons' despite
  Day-time and night-time are one,
Till the curse of the kings and the chain
  Break, and their toils be undone.

10

Christian, what of the night?—
  I cannot tell; I am blind.
  I halt and hearken behind
If haply the hours will go back
And return to the dear dead light,
  To the watchfires and stars that of old
Shone where the sky now is black,
  Glowed where the earth now is cold.

11

High priest, what of the night?—
  The night is horrible here
  With haggard faces and fear,
Blood, and the burning of fire.
Mine eyes are emptied of sight,
  Mine hands are full of the dust.
If the God of my faith be a liar,
  Who is it that I shall trust?

12

Princes, what of the night?—
Night with pestilent breath
Feeds us, children of death,
Clothes us close with her gloom.
Rapine and famine and fright
Crouch at our feet and are fed.
Earth where we pass is a tomb,
Life where we triumph is dead.

13

Martyrs, what of the night?—
Nay, is it night with you yet?
We, for our part, we forget
What night was, if it were.
The loud red mouths of the fight
Are silent and shut where we are.
In our eyes the tempestuous air
Shines as the face of a star.

14

England, what of the night?—
Night is for slumber and sleep,
Warm, no season to weep.
Let me alone till the day.
Sleep would I still if I might,
Who have slept for two hundred years.
Once I had honour, they say;
But slumber is sweeter than tears.

15

France, what of the night?—
Night is the prostitute's noon,
Kissed and drugged till she swoon,
Spat upon, trod upon, whored.
With bloodred rose-garlands dight,
Round me reels in the dance
Death, my saviour, my lord,
Crowned; there is no more France.

16

Italy, what of the night?—
Ah, child, child, it is long!
Moonbeam and starbeam and song
Leave it dumb now and dark.
Yet I perceive on the height
Eastward, not now very far,
A song too loud for the lark,
A light too strong for a star.

17

Germany, what of the night?—
Long has it lulled me with dreams;
Now at midwatch, as it seems,
Light is brought back to mine eyes,
And the mastery of old and the might
Lives in the joints of mine hands,
Steadies my limbs as they rise,
Strengthens my foot as it stands.

18

Europe, what of the night?—
  Ask of heaven, and the sea,
  And my babes on the bosom of me,
Nations of mine, but ungrown.
There is one who shall surely requite
  All that endure or that err:
She can answer alone:
  Ask not of me, but of her.

19

Liberty, what of the night?—
  I feel not the red rains fall,
  Hear not the tempest at all,
Nor thunder in heaven any more.
All the distance is white
  With the soundless feet of the sun.
Night, with the woes that it wore,
  Night is over and done.

SUPER FLUMINA BABYLONIS

By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept,
Remembering thee,
That for ages of agony hast endured, and slept,
And wouldst not see.

By the waters of Babylon we stood up and sang,
Considering thee,
That a blast of deliverance in the darkness rang,
To set thee free.

And with trumpets and thunderings and with morning song
Came up the light;
And thy spirit uplifted thee to forget thy wrong
As day doth night.

And thy sons were dejected not any more, as then
When thou wast shamed;
When thy lovers went heavily without heart, as men
Whose life was maimed.

In the desolate distances, with a great desire,
For thy love's sake,
With our hearts going back to thee, they were filled with fire,
Were nigh to break.

It was said to us : " Verily ye are great of heart,
But ye shall bend ;
Ye are bondmen and bondwomen, to be scourged and smart,
To toil and tend."

And with harrows men harrowed us, and subdued with spears,
And crushed with shame ;
And the summer and winter was, and the length of years,
And no change came.

By the rivers of Italy, by the sacred streams,
By town, by tower,
There was feasting with revelling, there was sleep with dreams,
Until thine hour.

And they slept and they rioted on their rose-hung beds,
With mouths on flame,
And with love-locks vine-chapleted, and with rose-crowned heads
And robes of shame.

And they knew not their forefathers, nor the hills and streams
And words of power,
Nor the gods that were good to them, but with songs and dreams
Filled up their hour.

By the rivers of Italy, by the dry streams' beds,
When thy time came,
There was casting of crowns from them, from their young men's heads,
The crowns of shame.

By the horn of Eridanus, by the Tiber mouth,
As thy day rose,
They arose up and girded them to the north and south,
By seas, by snows.

As a water in January the frost confines,
Thy kings bound thee ;
As a water in April is, in the new-blown vines,
Thy sons made free.

And thy lovers that looked for thee, and that mourned from far,
For thy sake dead,
We rejoiced in the light of thee, in the signal star
Above thine head.

In thy grief had we followed thee, in thy passion loved,
Loved in thy loss ;
In thy shame we stood fast to thee, with thy pangs were moved,
Clung to thy cross.

By the hillside of Calvary we beheld thy blood,
Thy bloodred tears,
As a mother's in bitterness, an unebbing flood,
Years upon years.

And the north was Gethsemane, without leaf or bloom,
A garden sealed ;
And the south was Aceldama, for a sanguine fume
Hid all the field.

By the stone of the sepulchre we returned to weep,
From far, from prison ;
And the guards by it keeping it we beheld asleep,
But thou wast risen.

And an angel's similitude by the unsealed grave,
And by the stone :
And the voice was angelical, to whose words God gave
Strength like his own.

" Lo, the graveclothes of Italy that are folded up
In the grave's gloom !
And the guards as men wrought upon with a charmèd cup,
By the open tomb.

" And her body most beautiful, and her shining head,
These are not here ;
For your mother, for Italy, is not surely dead :
Have ye no fear.

" As of old time she spake to you, and you hardly heard,
Hardly took heed,
So now also she saith to you, yet another word,
Who is risen indeed.

"By my saying she saith to you, in your ears she saith,
Who hear these things,
Put no trust in men's royalties, nor in great men's breath,
Nor words of kings.

"For the life of them vanishes and is no more seen,
Nor no more known;
Nor shall any remember him if a crown hath been,
Or where a throne.

"Unto each man his handiwork, unto each his crown,
The just Fate gives;
Whoso takes the world's life or him and his own lays down,
He, dying so, lives.

"Whoso bears the whole heaviness of the wronged world's weight
And puts it by,
It is well with him suffering, though he face man's fate;
How should he die?

"Seeing death has no part in him any more, no power
Upon his head;
He has bought his eternity with a little hour,
And is not dead.

"For an hour, if ye look for him, he is no more found,
For one hour's space;
Then ye lift up your eyes to him and behold him crowned,
A deathless face

"On the mountains of memory, by the world's well-springs,
In all men's eyes,
Where the light of the life of him is on all past things,
Death only dies.

"Not the light that was quenched for us, nor the deeds that were,
Nor the ancient days,
Nor the sorrows not sorrowful, nor the face most fair
Of perfect praise."

So the angel of Italy's resurrection said,
So yet he saith;
So the son of her suffering, that from breasts nigh dead
Drew life, not death.

That the pavement of Golgotha should be white as snow,
Not red, but white;
That the waters of Babylon should no longer flow,
And men see light.

THE HALT BEFORE ROME

SEPTEMBER 1867

Is it so, that the sword is broken,
  Our sword, that was halfway drawn?
Is it so, that the light was a spark,
That the bird we hailed as the lark
Sang in her sleep in the dark,
And the song we took for a token
  Bore false witness of dawn?

Spread in the sight of the lion,
  Surely, we said, is the net
Spread but in vain, and the snare
Vain; for the light is aware,
And the common, the chainless air,
Of his coming whom all we cry on;
  Surely in vain is it set.

Surely the day is on our side,
  And heaven, and the sacred sun;
Surely the stars, and the bright
Immemorial inscrutable night:
Yea, the darkness, because of our light,
Is no darkness, but blooms as a bower-side
  When the winter is over and done;

Blooms underfoot with young grasses
  Green, and with leaves overhead,
Windflowers white, and the low
New-dropped blossoms of snow ;
And or ever the May winds blow,
And or ever the March wind passes,
  Flames with anemones red.

We are here in the world's bower-garden,
  We that have watched out the snow.
Surely the fruitfuller showers,
The splendider sunbeams are ours ;
Shall winter return on the flowers,
And the frost after April harden,
  And the fountains in May not flow ?

We have in our hands the shining
  And the fire in our hearts of a star.
Who are we that our tongues should palter,
Hearts bow down, hands falter,
Who are clothed as with flame from the altar,
That the kings of the earth, repining,
  Far off, watch from afar ?

Woe is ours if we doubt or dissemble,
  Woe, if our hearts not abide.
Are our chiefs not among us, we said,
Great chiefs, living and dead,
To lead us glad to be led ?
For whose sake, if a man of us tremble,
  He shall not be on our side.

What matter if these lands tarry,
That tarried (we said) not of old?
France, made drunken by fate,
England, that bore up the weight
Once of men's freedom, a freight
Holy, but heavy to carry
For hands overflowing with gold.

Though this be lame, and the other
Fleet, but blind from the sun,
And the race be no more to these,
Alas! nor the palm to seize,
Who are weary and hungry of ease,
Yet, O Freedom, we said, O our mother,
Is there not left to thee one?

Is there not left of thy daughters,
Is there not one to thine hand?
Fairer than these, and of fame
Higher from of old by her name;
Washed in her tears, and in flame
Bathed as in baptism of waters,
Unto all men a chosen land.

Her hope in her heart was broken,
Fire was upon her, and clomb,
Hiding her, high as her head;
And the world went past her, and said
(We heard it say) she was dead;
And now, behold, she hath spoken,
She that was dead, saying, "Rome."

O mother of all men's nations,
Thou knowest if the deaf world heard!
Heard not now to her lowest
Depths, where the strong blood slowest
Beats at her bosom, thou knowest,
In her toils, in her dim tribulations,
Rejoiced not, hearing the word.

The sorrowful, bound unto sorrow,
The woe-worn people, and all
That of old were discomforted,
And men that famish for bread,
And men that mourn for their dead,
She bade them be glad on the morrow,
Who endured in the day of her thrall.

The blind, and the people in prison,
Souls without hope, without home,
How glad were they all that heard!
When the winged white flame of the word
Passed over men's dust, and stirred
Death; for Italia was risen,
And risen her light upon Rome.

The light of her sword in the gateway
Shone, an unquenchable flame,
Bloodless, a sword to release,
A light from the eyes of peace,
To bid grief utterly cease,
And the wrong of the old world straightway
Pass from the face of her fame:

Hers, whom we turn to and cry on,
Italy, mother of men :
From the light of the face of her glory,
At the sound of the storm of her story,
That the sanguine shadows and hoary
Should flee from the foot of the lion.
Lion-like, forth of his den.

As the answering of thunder to thunder
Is the storm-beaten sound of her past ;
As the calling of sea unto sea
Is the noise of her years yet to be ;
For this ye knew not is she,
Whose bonds are broken in sunder ;
This is she at the last.

So spake we aloud, high-minded,
Full of our will ; and behold,
The speech that was halfway spoken
Breaks, as a pledge that is broken,
As a king's pledge, leaving in token
Grief only for high hopes blinded,
New grief grafted on old.

We halt by the walls of the city,
Within sound of the clash of her chain.
Hearing, we know that in there
The lioness chafes in her lair,
Shakes the storm of her hair,
Struggles in hands without pity,
Roars to the lion in vain.

Whose hand is stretched forth upon her?
Whose curb is white with her foam?
Clothed with the cloud of his deeds,
Swathed in the shroud of his creeds,
Who is this that has trapped her and leads,
Who turns to despair and dishonour
Her name, her name that was Rome?

Over fields without harvest or culture,
Over hordes without honour or love,
Over nations that groan with their kings,
As an imminent pestilence flings
Swift death from her shadowing wings,
So he, who hath claws as a vulture,
Plumage and beak as a dove.

He saith, "I am pilot and haven,
Light and redemption I am
Unto souls overlaboured," he saith;
And to all men the blast of his breath
Is a savour of death unto death;
And the Dove of his worship a raven,
And a wolf-cub the life-giving Lamb.

He calls his sheep as a shepherd,
Calls from the wilderness home,
"Come unto me and be fed,"
To feed them with ashes for bread
And grass from the graves of the dead,
Leaps on the fold as a leopard,
Slays, and says, "I am Rome."

Rome, having rent her in sunder,
With the clasp of an adder he clasps ;
Swift to shed blood are his feet,
And his lips, that have man for their meat,
Smoother than oil, and more sweet
Than honey, but hidden thereunder
Festers the poison of asps.

As swords are his tender mercies,
His kisses as mortal stings ;
Under his hallowing hands
Life dies down in all lands ;
Kings pray to him, prone where he stands,
And his blessings, as other men's curses,
Disanoint where they consecrate kings.

With an oil of unclean consecration,
With effusion of blood and of tears,
With uplifting of cross and of keys,
Priest, though thou hallow us these,
Yet even as they cling to thy knees
Nation awakens by nation,
King by king disappears.

How shall the spirit be loyal
To the shell of a spiritless thing?
Erred once, in only a word,
The sweet great song that we heard
Poured upon Tuscany, erred,
Calling a crowned man royal
That was no more than a king.

Sea-eagle of English feather,
A song-bird beautiful-souled,
She knew not them that she sang;
The golden trumpet that rang
From Florence, in vain for them, sprang
As a note in the nightingales' weather
Far over Fiesole rolled.

She saw not—happy, not seeing—
Saw not as we with her eyes
Aspromonte; she felt
Never the heart in her melt
As in us when the news was dealt
Melted all hope out of being,
Dropped all dawn from the skies.

In that weary funereal season,
In that heart-stricken grief-ridden time,
The weight of a king and the worth,
With anger and sorrowful mirth,
We weighed in the balance of earth,
And light was his word as a treason,
And heavy his crown as a crime.

Banners of kings shall ye follow
None, and have thrones on your side
None; ye shall gather and grow
Silently, row upon row,
Chosen of Freedom to go
Gladly where darkness may swallow,
Gladly where death may divide.

Have we not men with us royal,
  Men the masters of things?
In the days when our life is made new,
All souls perfect and true
Shall adore whom their forefathers slew;
And these indeed shall be loyal,
  And those indeed shall be kings.

Yet for a space they abide with us,
  Yet for a little they stand,
Bearing the heat of the day.
When their presence is taken away,
We shall wonder and worship, and say,
"Was not a star on our side with us?
  Was not a God at our hand?"

These, O men, shall ye honour,
  Liberty only, and these.
For thy sake and for all men's and mine,
Brother, the crowns of them shine
Lighting the way to her shrine,
That our eyes may be fastened upon her,
  That our hands may encompass her knees.

In this day is the sign of her shown to you;
  Choose ye, to live or to die.
Now is her harvest in hand;
Now is her light in the land;
Choose ye, to sink or to stand,
For the might of her strength is made known
    to you
  Now, and her arm is on high.

Serve not for any man's wages,
Pleasure nor glory nor gold;
Not by her side are they won
Who saith unto each of you, "Son,
Silver and gold have I none;
I give but the love of all ages,
And the life of my people of old."

Fear not for any man's terrors;
Wait not for any man's word;
Patiently, each in his place,
Gird up your loins to the race;
Following the print of her pace,
Purged of desires and of errors,
March to the tune ye have heard.

March to the tune of the voice of her,
Breathing the balm of her breath,
Loving the light of her skies.
Blessed is he on whose eyes
Dawns but her light as he dies;
Blessed are ye that make choice of her,
Equal to life and to death.

Ye that when faith is nigh frozen,
Ye that when hope is nigh gone,
Still, over wastes, over waves,
Still, among wrecks, among graves,
Follow the splendour that saves,
Happy, her children, her chosen,
Loyally led of her on.

The sheep of the priests, and the cattle
That feed in the penfolds of kings,
Sleek is their flock and well-fed;
Hardly she giveth you bread,
Hardly a rest for the head,
Till the day of the blast of the battle
And the storm of the wind of her wings.

Ye that have joy in your living,
Ye that are careful to live,
You her thunders go by:
Live, let men be, let them lie,
Serve your season, and die;
Gifts have your masters for giving,
Gifts hath not Freedom to give;

She, without shelter or station,
She, beyond limit or bar,
Urges to slumberless speed
Armies that famish, that bleed,
Sowing their lives for her seed,
That their dust may rebuild her a nation,
That their souls may relight her a star.

Happy are all they that follow her;
Them shall no trouble cast down;
Though she slay them, yet shall they trust in her,
For unsure there is nought nor unjust in her,
Blemish is none, neither rust in her;
Though it threaten, the night shall not swallow her,
Tempest and storm shall not drown.

Hither, O strangers, that cry for her,
  Holding your lives in your hands,
Hither, for here is your light,
Where Italy is, and her might ;
Strength shall be given you to fight,
Grace shall be given you to die for her,
  For the flower, for the lady of lands ;

Turn ye, whose anguish oppressing you
  Crushes, asleep and awake,
For the wrong which is wrought as of yore ;
That Italia may give of her store,
Having these things to give and no more ;
Only her hands on you, blessing you ;
  Only a pang for her sake ;

Only her bosom to die on ;
  Only her heart for a home,
And a name with her children to be
From Calabrian to Adrian sea
Famous in cities made free
That ring to the roar of the lion
  Proclaiming republican Rome.

MENTANA: FIRST ANNIVERSARY

At the time when the stars are grey,
  And the gold of the molten moon
Fades, and the twilight is thinned,
And the sun leaps up, and the wind,
A light rose, not of the day,
  A stronger light than of noon.

As the light of a face much loved
  Was the face of the light that clomb;
As a mother's whitened with woes
Her adorable head that arose;
As the sound of a God that is moved,
  Her voice went forth upon Rome.

At her lips it fluttered and failed
  Twice, and sobbed into song,
And sank as a flame sinks under;
Then spake, and the speech was thunder,
And the cheek as he heard it paled
  Of the wrongdoer grown grey with the wrong.

"Is it time, is it time appointed,
  Angel of time, is it near?
For the spent night aches into day
When the kings shall slay not or pray,
And the high-priest, accursed and anointed,
  Sickens to deathward with fear.

"For the bones of my slain are stirred,
And the seed of my earth in her womb
Moves as the heart of a bud
Beating with odorous blood
To the tune of the loud first bird
Burns and yearns into bloom.

"I lay my hand on her bosom,
My hand on the heart of my earth,
And I feel as with shiver and sob
The triumphant heart in her throb,
The dead petals dilate into blossom,
The divine blood beat into birth.

"O my earth, are the springs in thee dry?
O sweet, is thy body a tomb?
Nay, springs out of springs derive,
And summers from summers alive,
And the living from them that die;
No tomb is here, but a womb.

"O manifold womb and divine,
Give me fruit of my children, give!
I have given thee my dew for thy root,
Give thou me for my mouth of thy fruit;
Thine are the dead that are mine,
And mine are thy sons that live.

"O goodly children, O strong
Italian spirits, that wear
My glories as garments about you,
Could time or the world misdoubt you,
Behold, in disproof of the wrong,
The field of the grave-pits there.

"And ye that fell upon sleep,
We have you too with us yet.
Fairer than life or than youth
Is this, to die for the truth:
No death can sink you so deep
As their graves whom their brethren forget.

"Were not your pains as my pains?
As my name are your names not divine?
Was not the light in your eyes
Mine, the light of my skies,
And the sweet shed blood of your veins,
O my beautiful martyrs, mine?

"Of mine earth were your dear limbs made,
Of mine air was your sweet life's breath;
At the breasts of my love ye were fed,
O my children, my chosen, my dead,
At my breasts where again ye are laid,
At the old mother's bosom, in death.

"But ye that live, O their brothers,
Be ye to me as they were;
Give me, my children that live,
What these dead grudged not to give,
Who alive were sons of your mother's,
Whose lips drew breath of your air.

"Till darkness by dawn be cloven,
Let youth's self mourn and abstain:
And love's self find not an hour,
And spring's self wear not a flower,
And Lycoris, with hair unenwoven,
Hail back to the banquet in vain.

"So sooner and surer the glory
That is not with us shall be,
And stronger the hands that smite
The heads of the sons of night,
And the sound throughout earth of our story
Give all men heart to be free."

BLESSED AMONG WOMEN

To the Signora Cairoli

1

Blessed was she that bare,
Hidden in flesh most fair,
For all men's sake the likeness of all love;
Holy that virgin's womb,
The old record saith, on whom
The glory of God alighted as a dove;
Blessed, who brought to gracious birth
The sweet-souled Saviour of a man-tormented earth.

2

But four times art thou blest,
At whose most holy breast
Four times a godlike soldier-saviour hung;
And thence a fourfold Christ
Given to be sacrificed
To the same cross as the same bosom clung;
Poured the same blood, to leave the same
Light on the many-folded mountain-skirts of fame.

3

Shall they and thou not live,
The children thou didst give
Forth of thine hands, a godlike gift, to death,
Through fire of death to pass
For her high sake that was
Thine and their mother, that gave all you breath?
Shall ye not live till time drop dead,
O mother, and each her children's consecrated head?

4

Many brought gifts to take
For her love's supreme sake,
Life and life's love, pleasure and praise and rest,
And went forth bare; but thou,
So much once richer, and now
Poorer than all these, more than these be blest;
Poorer so much, by so much given,
Than who gives earth for heaven's sake, not for earth's sake heaven.

5

Somewhat could each soul save,
What thing soever it gave,
But thine, mother, what has thy soul kept back?
None of thine all, not one,
To serve thee and be thy son,
Feed with love all thy days, lest one day lack;
All thy whole life's love, thine heart's whole,
Thou hast given as who gives gladly, O thou the supreme soul.

6

The heart's pure flesh and blood,
The heaven thy motherhood,
The live lips, the live eyes, that lived on thee ;
The hands that clove with sweet
Blind clutch to thine, the feet
That felt on earth their first way to thy knee ;
The little laughter of mouths milk-fed,
Now open again to feed on dust among the dead ;

7

The fair, strong, young men's strength,
Light of life-days and length,
And glory of earth seen under and stars above,
And years that bring to tame
Now the wild falcon fame,
Now, to stroke smooth, the dove-white breast of love ;
The life unlived, the unsown seeds,
Suns unbeholden, songs unsung, and undone deeds.

8

Therefore shall man's love be
As an own son to thee,
And the world's worship of thee for a child ;
All thine own land as one
New-born, a nursing son,
All thine own people a new birth undefiled ;
And all the unborn Italian time,
And all its glory, and all its works, thy seed sublime.

9

That henceforth no man's breath,
Saying "Italy," but saith
In that most sovereign word thine equal name;
Nor can one speak of thee
But he saith "Italy,"
Seeing in two suns one co-eternal flame;
One heat, one heaven, one heart, one fire,
One light, one love, one benediction, one desire.

10

Blest above praise and prayer
And incense of men's air,
Thy place is higher than where such voices rise
As in men's temples make
Music for some vain sake,
This God's or that God's, in one weary wise;
Thee the soul silent, the shut heart,
The locked lips of the spirit praise thee that thou art.

11

Yea, for man's whole life's length,
And with man's whole soul's strength,
We praise thee, O holy, and bless thee, O mother of lights;
And send forth as on wings
The world's heart's thanksgivings,
Song-birds to sing thy days through and thy nights;
And wrap thee around and arch thee above
With the air of benediction and the heaven of love.

12

And toward thee our unbreathed words
Fly speechless, winged as birds,
As the Indian flock, children of Paradise,
The winged things without feet,
Fed with God's dew for meat,
That live in the air and light of the utter skies;
So fleet, so flying a footless flight,
With wings for feet love seeks thee, to partake thy sight.

13

Love like a clear sky spread
Bends over thy loved head,
As a new heaven bends over a new-born earth,
When the old night's womb is great
With young stars passionate
And fair new planets fiery-fresh from birth;
And moon-white here, there hot like Mars,
Souls that are worlds shine on thee, spirits that are stars.

14

Till the whole sky burns through
With heaven's own heart-deep hue,
With passion-coloured glories of lit souls;
And thine above all names
Writ highest with lettering flames
Lightens, and all the old starriest aureoles
And all the old holiest memories wane,
And the old names of love's chosen, found in thy sight vain.

15

And crowned heads are discrowned,
And stars sink without sound,
And love's self for thy love's sake waxes pale ;
Seeing from his storied skies
In what new reverent wise
Thee Rome's most highest, her sovereign daughters, hail ;
Thee Portia, thee Veturia grey,
Thee Arria, thee Cornelia, Roman more than they.

16

Even all these as all we
Subdue themselves to thee,
Bow their heads haloed, quench their fiery fame ;
Seen through dim years divine,
Their faint lights feminine
Sink, then spring up rekindled from thy flame ;
Fade, then reflower and reillume
From thy fresh spring their wintering age with new-blown bloom.

17

To thy much holier head
Even theirs, the holy and dead,
Bow themselves each one from her heavenward height ;
Each in her shining turn,
All tremble toward thee and yearn
To melt in thine their consummated light ;
Till from day's Capitolian dome
One glory of many glories lighten upon Rome.

18

Hush thyself, song, and cease,
Close, lips, and hold your peace;
What help hast thou, what part have ye herein?
But you, with sweet shut eyes,
Heart-hidden memories,
Dreams and dumb thoughts that keep what things have been
Silent, and pure of all words said,
Praise without song the living, without dirge the dead.

19

Thou, strengthless in these things,
Song, fold thy feebler wings,
And as a pilgrim go forth girt and shod,
And where the new graves are,
And where the sunset star,
To the pure spirit of man that men call God,
To the high soul of things, that is
Made of men's heavenlier hopes and mightier memories;

20

To the elements that make
For the soul's living sake
This raiment of dead things, of shadow and trance,
That give us chance and time
Wherein to aspire and climb
And set our life's work higher than time or chance;
The old sacred elements, that give
The breath of life to days that die, to deeds that live;

21

To them, veiled gods and great,
There bow thee and dedicate
The speechless spirit in these thy weak words hidden ;
And mix thy reverent breath
With holier air of death,
At the high feast of sorrow a guest unbidden,
Till with divine triumphal tears
Thou fill men's eyes who listen with a heart that hears.

THE LITANY OF NATIONS

μᾶ Γᾶ, μᾶ Γᾶ, βοὰν
φοβερὸν ἀπότρεπε.
ÆSCH. *Supp.* 890.

CHORUS

If with voice of words or prayers thy sons may reach thee,
We thy latter sons, the men thine after-birth,
We the children of thy grey-grown age, O Earth,
O our mother everlasting, we beseech thee,
By the sealed and secret ages of thy life;
By the darkness wherein grew thy sacred forces;
By the songs of stars thy sisters in their courses;
By thine own song hoarse and hollow and shrill with strife;
By thy voice distuned and marred of modulation;
By the discord of thy measure's march with theirs;
By the beauties of thy bosom, and the cares;
By thy glory of growth, and splendour of thy station;
By the shame of men thy children, and the pride;
By the pale-cheeked hope that sleeps and weeps and passes,
As the grey dew from the morning mountain-grasses;
By the white-lipped sightless memories that abide;

By the silence and the sound of many sorrows;
By the joys that leapt up living and fell dead;
By the veil that hides thy hands and breasts and head,
Wrought of divers-coloured days and nights and morrows;
Isis, thou that knowest of God what worlds are worth,
Thou the ghost of God, the mother uncreated,
Soul for whom the floating forceless ages waited
As our forceless fancies wait on thee, O Earth;
Thou the body and soul, the father-God and mother,
If at all it move thee, knowing of all things done
Here where evil things and good things are not one,
But their faces are as fire against each other;
By thy morning and thine evening, night and day;
By the first white light that stirs and strives and hovers
As a bird above the brood her bosom covers,
By the sweet last star that takes the westward way;
By the night whose feet are shod with snow or thunder,
Fledged with plumes of storm, or soundless as the dew;
By the vesture bound of many-folded blue
Round her breathless breasts, and all the woven wonder;
By the golden-growing eastern stream of sea;
By the sounds of sunrise moving in the mountains;
By the forces of the floods and unsealed fountains;
Thou that badest man be born, bid man be free.

GREECE

I am she that made thee lovely with my beauty
From north to south :
Mine, the fairest lips, took first the fire of duty
From thine own mouth.
Mine, the fairest eyes, sought first thy laws and knew them
Truths undefiled ;
Mine, the fairest hands, took freedom first into them,
A weanling child.
By my light, now he lies sleeping, seen above him
Where none sees other ;
By my dead that loved and living men that love him ;
(*Cho.*) Hear us, O mother.

ITALY

I am she that was the light of thee enkindled
When Greece grew dim ;
She whose life grew up with man's free life, and dwindled
With wane of him.
She that once by sword and once by word imperial
Struck bright thy gloom ;
And a third time, casting off these years funereal,
Shall burst thy tomb.
By that bond 'twixt thee and me whereat affrighted
Thy tyrants fear us ;
By that hope and this remembrance reunited ;
(*Cho.*) O mother, hear us.

SPAIN

I am she that set my seal upon the nameless
West worlds of seas ;
And my sons as brides took unto them the tameless
Hesperides.
Till my sins and sons through sinless lands dispersèd,
With red flame shod,
Made accurst the name of man, and thrice accursèd
The name of God.
Lest for those past fires the fires of my repentance
Hell's fume yet smother,
Now my blood would buy remission of my sentence ;
(*Cho.*) Hear us, O mother.

FRANCE

I am she that was thy sign and standard-bearer,
Thy voice and cry ;
She that washed thee with her blood and left thee fairer,
The same was I.
Were not these the hands that raised thee fallen and fed thee,
These hands defiled ?
Was not I thy tongue that spake, thine eye that led thee,
Not I thy child ?
By the darkness on our dreams, and the dead errors
Of dead times near us ;
By the hopes that hang around thee, and the terrors ;
(*Cho.*) O mother, hear us.

RUSSIA

I am she whose hands are strong and her eyes blinded
And lips athirst
Till upon the night of nations many-minded
One bright day burst :
Till the myriad stars be molten into one light,
And that light thine ;
Till the soul of man be parcel of the sunlight,
And thine of mine.
By the snows that blanch not him nor cleanse from slaughter
Who slays his brother ;
By the stains and by the chains on me thy daughter ;
(*Cho.*) Hear us, O mother.

SWITZERLAND

I am she that shews on mighty limbs and maiden
Nor chain nor stain ;
For what blood can touch these hands with gold unladen,
These feet what chain ?
By the surf of spears one shieldless bosom breasted
And was my shield,
Till the plume-plucked Austrian vulture-heads twin-crested
Twice drenched the field ;
By the snows and souls untrampled and untroubled
That shine to cheer us,
Light of those to these responsive and redoubled ;
(*Cho.*) O mother, hear us.

GERMANY

I am she beside whose forest-hidden fountains
Slept freedom armed,
By the magic born to music in my mountains
Heart-chained and charmed.
By those days the very dream whereof delivers
My soul from wrong;
By the sounds that make of all my ringing rivers
None knows what song;
By the many tribes and names of my division
One from another;
By the single eye of sun-compelling vision;
(*Cho.*) Hear us, O mother.

ENGLAND

I am she that was and was not of thy chosen,
Free, and not free;
She that fed thy springs, till now her springs are frozen;
Yet I am she.
By the sea that clothed and sun that saw me splendid
And fame that crowned,
By the song-fires and the sword-fires mixed and blended
That robed me round;
By the star that Milton's soul for Shelley's lighted,
Whose rays insphere us;
By the beacon-bright Republic far-off sighted;
(*Cho.*) O mother, hear us.

CHORUS

Turn away from us the cross-blown blasts of error,
That drown each other ;
Turn away the fearful cry, the loud-tongued terror,
O Earth, O mother.
Turn away their eyes who track, their hearts who follow,
The pathless past ;
Shew the soul of man, as summer shews the swallow,
The way at last.
By the sloth of men that all too long endure men
On man to tread ;
By the cry of men, the bitter cry of poor men
That faint for bread ;
By the blood-sweat of the people in the garden
Inwalled of kings ;
By his passion interceding for their pardon
Who do these things ;
By the sightless souls and fleshless limbs that labour
For not their fruit ;
By the foodless mouth with foodless heart for neighbour,
That, mad, is mute ;
By the child that famine eats as worms the blossom
—Ah God, the child !
By the milkless lips that strain the bloodless bosom
Till woe runs wild ;
By the pastures that give grass to feed the lamb in,
Where men lack meat ;
By the cities clad with gold and shame and famine ;
By field and street ;
By the people, by the poor man, by the master
That men call slave ;

By the cross-winds of defeat and of disaster,
By wreck, by wave;
By the helm that keeps us still to sunwards driving,
Still eastward bound,
Till, as night-watch ends, day burn on eyes reviving,
And land be found:
We thy children, that arraign not nor impeach thee
Though no star steer us,
By the waves that wash the morning we beseech thee,
O mother, hear us.

HERTHA

I AM that which began ;
Out of me the years roll ;
Out of me God and man ;
I am equal and whole ;
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily ;
I am the soul.

Before ever land was,
Before ever the sea,
Or soft hair of the grass,
Or fair limbs of the tree,
Or the flesh-coloured fruit of my branches, I was, and thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources
First drifted and swam ;
Out of me are the forces
That save it or damn ;
Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird ; before God was, I am.

Beside or above me
Nought is there to go ;
Love or unlove me,
Unknow me or know,
I am that which unloves me and loves ; I am stricken, and I am the blow.

I the mark that is missed
And the arrows that miss,
I the mouth that is kissed
And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul and the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses
My spirit elate ;
That which caresses
With hands uncreate
My limbs unbegotten that measure the length of the measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,
Looking Godward, to cry
"I am I, thou art thou,
I am low, thou art high"?
I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him ; find thou but thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,
The plough-cloven clod
And the ploughshare drawn thorough,
The germ and the sod,
The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower, the dust which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,
Child, underground?
Fire that impassioned thee,
Iron that bound,
Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart
Thou hast seen with thine eyes
With what cunning of art
Thou wast wrought in what wise,
By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and shown on my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
Knowledge of me?
Hath the wilderness told it thee?
Hast thou learnt of the sea?
Hast thou communed in spirit with night? have the winds taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star
To show light on thy brow
That thou sawest from afar
What I show to thee now?
Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the mountains and thou?

What is here, dost thou know it?
What was, hast thou known?
Prophet nor poet
Nor tripod nor throne
Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but only thy mother alone.

Mother, not maker,
Born, and not made;
Though her children forsake her,
Allured or afraid,
Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs not for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night ;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,
As my soul in thee saith ;
Give thou as I gave thee,
Thy life-blood and breath,
Green leaves of thy labour, white flowers of thy thought, and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving
As mine were to thee ;
The free life of thy living,
Be the gift of it free ;
Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt thou give thee to me.

O children of banishment,
Souls overcast,
Were the lights ye see vanish meant
Alway to last,
Ye would know not the sun overshining the shadows and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
The dim paths of the night
Set the shadow called God
In your skies to give light ;
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadow less soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted
That swells to the sky
With frondage red-fruited,
The life-tree am I;
In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves: ye shall live and not die.

But the Gods of your fashion
That take and that give,
In their pity and passion
That scourge and forgive,
They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls off; they shall die and not live.

My own blood is what stanches
The wounds in my bark;
Stars caught in my branches
Make day of the dark,
And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread out their fires as a spark.

Where dead ages hide under
The live roots of the tree,
In my darkness the thunder
Makes utterance of me;
In the clash of my boughs with each other ye hear the waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,
As his feathers are spread
And his feet set to climb
Through the boughs overhead,
And my foliage rings round him and rustles, and branches are bent with his tread.

The storm-winds of ages
Blow through me and cease,
The war-wind that rages,
The spring-wind of peace,
Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one of my blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,
All shadows and lights
On the world's mountain-ranges
And stream-riven heights,
Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and language of storm-clouds on earth-shaking nights ;

All forms of all faces,
All works of all hands
In unsearchable places
Of time-stricken lands,
All death and all life, and all reigns and all ruins, drop through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden
And more than ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
But only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or deathworms below.

These too have their part in me,
As I too in these ;
Such fire is at heart in me,
Such sap is this tree's,
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite lands and of seas.

In the spring-coloured hours
When my mind was as May's,
There brake forth of me flowers
By centuries of days,
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood, shot out from my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing
And smell of their shoots
Were as warmth and sweet singing
And strength to my roots ;
And the lives of my children made perfect with freedom of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be ;
I have need not of prayer ;
I have need of you free
As your mouths of mine air ;
That my heart may be greater within me, beholding the fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is
Of faiths ye espouse ;
In me only the root is
That blooms in your boughs ;
Behold now your God that ye made you, to feed him with faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening
Abysses adored,
With dayspring and lightning
For lamp and for sword,
God thunders in heaven, and his angels are red with the wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful
Toward Gods not of me,
Was not I enough beautiful?
Was it hard to be free?
For behold, I am with you, am in you and of you; look forth now and see.

Lo, winged with world's wonders,
With miracles shod,
With the fires of his thunders
For raiment and rod,
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are white with the terror of God.

For his twilight is come on him,
His anguish is here;
And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
Grown grey from his fear;
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last of his infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,
Truth slays and forgives;
But to you, as time takes him,
This new thing it gives,
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon freedom and lives.

For truth only is living,
Truth only is whole,
And the love of his giving
Man's polestar and pole;
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed of my soul.

One birth of my bosom ;
One beam of mine eye ;
One topmost blossom
That scales the sky ;
Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I.

BEFORE A CRUCIFIX

Here, down between the dusty trees,
  At this lank edge of haggard wood,
Women with labour-loosened knees,
  With gaunt backs bowed by servitude,
Stop, shift their loads, and pray, and fare
Forth with souls easier for the prayer.

The suns have branded black, the rains
  Striped grey this piteous God of theirs;
The face is full of prayers and pains,
  To which they bring their pains and prayers;
Lean limbs that shew the labouring bones,
And ghastly mouth that gapes and groans.

God of this grievous people, wrought
  After the likeness of their race,
By faces like thine own besought,
  Thine own blind helpless eyeless face,
I too, that have nor tongue nor knee
For prayer, I have a word to thee.

It was for this then, that thy speech
  Was blown about the world in flame
And men's souls shot up out of reach
  Of fear or lust or thwarting shame—
That thy faith over souls should pass
As sea-winds burning the grey grass?

It was for this, that prayers like these
  Should spend themselves about thy feet,
And with hard overlaboured knees
  Kneeling, these slaves of men should beat
Bosoms too lean to suckle sons
And fruitless as their orisons?

It was for this, that men should make
  Thy name a fetter on men's necks,
Poor men's made poorer for thy sake,
  And women's withered out of sex?
It was for this, that slaves should be,
Thy word was passed to set men free?

The nineteenth wave of the ages rolls
  Now deathward since thy death and birth.
Hast thou fed full men's starved-out souls?
  Hast thou brought freedom upon earth?
Or are there less oppressions done
In this wild world under the sun?

Nay, if indeed thou be not dead,
  Before thy terrene shrine be shaken,
Look down, turn usward, bow thine head;
  O thou that wast of God forsaken,
Look on thine household here, and see
These that have not forsaken thee.

Thy faith is fire upon their lips,
  Thy kingdom golden in their hands;
They scourge us with thy words for whips,
  They brand us with thy words for brands;
The thirst that made thy dry throat shrink
To their moist mouths commends the drink.

The toothèd thorns that bit thy brows
  Lighten the weight of gold on theirs ;
Thy nakedness enrobes thy spouse
  With the soft sanguine stuff she wears
Whose old limbs use for ointment yet
Thine agony and bloody sweat.

The blinding buffets on thine head
  On their crowned heads confirm the crown ;
Thy scourging dyes their raiment red,
  And with thy bands they fasten down
For burial in the blood-bought field
The nations by thy stripes unhealed.

With iron for thy linen bands
  And unclean cloths for winding-sheet
They bind the people's nail-pierced hands,
  They hide the people's nail-pierced feet ;
And what man or what angel known
Shall roll back the sepulchral stone ?

But these have not the rich man's grave
  To sleep in when their pain is done.
These were not fit for God to save.
  As naked hell-fire is the sun
In their eyes living, and when dead
These have not where to lay their head.

They have no tomb to dig, and hide ;
  Earth is not theirs, that they should sleep.
On all these tombless crucified
  No lovers' eyes have time to weep.
So still, for all man's tears and creeds,
The sacred body hangs and bleeds.

Through the left hand a nail is driven,
  Faith, and another through the right,
Forged in the fires of hell and heaven,
  Fear that puts out the eye of light :
And the feet soiled and scarred and pale
Are pierced with falsehood for a nail.

And priests against the mouth divine
  Push their sponge full of poison yet
And bitter blood for myrrh and wine,
  And on the same reed is it set
Wherewith before they buffeted
The people's disanointed head.

O sacred head, O desecrate,
  O labour-wounded feet and hands,
O blood poured forth in pledge to fate
  Of nameless lives in divers lands,
O slain and spent and sacrificed
People, the grey-grown speechless Christ !

Is there a gospel in the red
  Old witness of thy wide-mouthed wounds ?
From thy blind stricken tongueless head
  What desolate evangel sounds
A hopeless note of hope deferred ?
What word, if there be any word ?

O son of man, beneath man's feet
  Cast down, O common face of man
Whereon all blows and buffets meet,
  O royal, O republican
Face of the people bruised and dumb
And longing till thy kingdom come !

The soldiers and the high priests part
  Thy vesture : all thy days are priced,
And all the nights that eat thine heart.
  And that one seamless coat of Christ,
The freedom of the natural soul,
They cast their lots for to keep whole.

No fragment of it save the name
  They leave thee for a crown of scorns
Wherewith to mock thy naked shame
  And forehead bitten through with thorns
And, marked with sanguine sweat and tears,
The stripes of eighteen hundred years.

And we seek yet if God or man
  Can loosen thee as Lazarus,
Bid thee rise up republican
  And save thyself and all of us;
But no disciple's tongue can say
When thou shalt take our sins away.

And mouldering now and hoar with moss
  Between us and the sunlight swings
The phantom of a Christless cross
  Shadowing the sheltered heads of kings
And making with its moving shade
The souls of harmless men afraid.

It creaks and rocks to left and right
  Consumed of rottenness and rust,
Worm-eaten of the worms of night,
  Dead as their spirits who put trust,
Round its base muttering as they sit,
In the time-cankered name of it.

Thou, in the day that breaks thy prison,
People, though these men take thy name,
And hail and hymn thee rearisen,
Who made songs erewhile of thy shame,
Give thou not ear ; for these are they
Whose good day was thine evil day.

Set not thine hand unto their cross.
Give not thy soul up sacrificed.
Change not the gold of faith for dross
Of Christian creeds that spit on Christ.
Let not thy tree of freedom be
Regrafted from that rotting tree.

This dead God here against my face
Hath help for no man ; who hath seen
The good works of it, or such grace
As thy grace in it, Nazarene,
As that from thy live lips which ran
For man's sake, O thou son of man ?

The tree of faith ingraffed by priests
Puts its foul foliage out above thee,
And round it feed man-eating beasts
Because of whom we dare not love thee ;
Though hearts reach back and memories ache,
We cannot praise thee for their sake.

O hidden face of man, whereover
The years have woven a viewless veil,
If thou wast verily man's lover,
What did thy love or blood avail ?
Thy blood the priests make poison of,
And in gold shekels coin thy love.

So when our souls look back to thee
They sicken, seeing against thy side,
Too foul to speak of or to see,
The leprous likeness of a bride,
Whose kissing lips through his lips grown
Leave their God rotten to the bone.

When we would see thee man, and know
What heart thou hadst toward men indeed,
Lo, thy blood-blackened altars ; lo,
The lips of priests that pray and feed
While their own hell's worm curls and licks
The poison of the crucifix.

Thou bad'st let children come to thee ;
What children now but curses come?
What manhood in that God can be
Who sees their worship, and is dumb?
No soul that lived, loved, wrought, and died,
Is this their carrion crucified.

Nay, if their God and thou be one,
If thou and this thing be the same,
Thou shouldst not look upon the sun ;
The sun grows haggard at thy name.
Come down, be done with, cease, give o'er ;
Hide thyself, strive not, be no more.

TENEBRÆ

At the chill high tide of the night,
  At the turn of the fluctuant hours,
When the waters of time are at height,
In a vision arose on my sight
  The kingdoms of earth and the powers.

In a dream without lightening of eyes
  I saw them, children of earth,
Nations and races arise,
Each one after his wise,
  Signed with the sign of his birth.

Sound was none of their feet,
  Light was none of their faces;
In their lips breath was not, or heat,
But a subtle murmur and sweet
  As of water in wan waste places.

Pale as from passionate years,
  Years unassuaged of desire,
Sang they soft in mine ears,
Crowned with jewels of tears,
  Girt with girdles of fire.

A slow song beaten and broken,
  As it were from the dust and the dead,
As of spirits athirst unsloken,
As of things unspeakable spoken,
  As of tears unendurable shed.

In the manifold sound remote,
  In the molten murmur of song,
There was but a sharp sole note
Alive on the night and afloat,
  The cry of the world's heart's wrong.

As the sea in the strait sea-caves,
  The sound came straitened and strange;
A noise of the rending of graves,
A tidal thunder of waves,
  The music of death and of change.

"We have waited so long," they say,
  "For a sound of the God, for a breath,
For a ripple of the refluence of day,
For the fresh bright wind of the fray,
  For the light of the sunrise of death.

"We have prayed not, we, to be strong,
  To fulfil the desire of our eyes;
—Howbeit they have watched for it long,
Watched, and the night did them wrong,
  Yet they say not of day, shall it rise?

"They are fearful and feeble with years,
  Yet they doubt not of day if it be;
Yea, blinded and beaten with tears,
Yea, sick with foresight of fears,
  Yet a little, and hardly, they see.

"We pray not, we, for the palm,
For the fruit ingraffed of the fight,
For the blossom of peace and the balm,
And the tender triumph and calm
Of crownless and weaponless right.

"We pray not, we, to behold
The latter august new birth,
The young day's purple and gold,
And divine, and rerisen as of old,
The sun-god Freedom on earth.

"Peace, and world's honour, and fame,
We have sought after none of these things;
The light of a life like flame
Passing, the storm of a name
Shaking the strongholds of kings:

"Nor, fashioned of fire and of air,
The splendour that burns on his head
Who was chiefest in ages that were,
Whose breath blew palaces bare,
Whose eye shone tyrannies dead:

"All these things in your day
Ye shall see, O our sons, and shall hold
Surely; but we, in the grey
Twilight, for one thing we pray,
In that day though our memories be cold:

"To feel on our brows as we wait
An air of the morning, a breath
From the springs of the east, from the gate
Whence freedom issues, and fate,
Sorrow, and triumph, and death:

" From a land whereon time hath not trod,
Where the spirit is bondless and bare,
And the world's rein breaks, and the rod,
And the soul of a man, which is God,
He adores without altar or prayer :

" For alone of herself and her right
She takes, and alone gives grace :
And the colours of things lose light,
And the forms, in the limitless white
Splendour of space without space :

" And the blossom of man from his tomb
Yearns open, the flower that survives ;
And the shadows of changes consume
In the colourless passionate bloom
Of the live light made of our lives :

" Seeing each life given is a leaf
Of the manifold multiform flower,
And the least among these, and the chief,
As an ear in the red-ripe sheaf
Stored for the harvesting hour.

" O spirit of man, most holy,
The measure of things and the root,
In our summers and winters a lowly
Seed, putting forth of them slowly
Thy supreme blossom and fruit ;

" In thy sacred and perfect year,
The souls that were parcel of thee
In the labour and life of us here
Shall be rays of thy sovereign sphere,
Springs of thy motion shall be.

"There is the fire that was man,
The light that was love, and the breath
That was hope ere deliverance began,
And the wind that was life for a span,
And the birth of new things, which is death

"There, whosoever had light,
And, having, for men's sake gave;
All that warred against night;
All that were found in the fight
Swift to be slain and to save;

"Undisbranched of the storms that disroot us,
Of the lures that enthrall unenticed;
The names that exalt and transmute us;
The blood-bright splendour of Brutus,
The snow-bright splendour of Christ.

"There all chains are undone;
Day there seems but as night;
Spirit and sense are as one
In the light not of star nor of sun;
Liberty there is the light.

"She, sole mother and maker,
Stronger than sorrow, than strife;
Deathless, though death overtake her;
Faithful, though faith should forsake her;
Spirit, and saviour, and life."

HYMN OF MAN

(During the Session in Rome of the Œcumenical Council)

In the grey beginning of years, in the twilight of things that began,
The word of the earth in the ears of the world, was it God? was it man?
The word of the earth to the spheres her sisters, the note of her song,
The sound of her speech in the ears of the starry and sisterly throng,
Was it praise or passion or prayer, was it love or devotion or dread,
When the veils of the shining air first wrapt her jubilant head?
When her eyes new-born of the night saw yet no star out of reach;
When her maiden mouth was alight with the flame of musical speech;
When her virgin feet were set on the terrible heavenly way,
And her virginal lids were wet with the dew of the birth of the day:
Eyes that had looked not on time, and ears that had heard not of death;
Lips that had learnt not the rhyme of change and passionate breath,

The rhythmic anguish of growth, and the motion of mutable things,
Of love that longs and is loth, and plume-plucked hope without wings,
Passions and pains without number, and life that runs and is lame,
From slumber again to slumber, the same race set for the same,
Where the runners outwear each other, but running with lampless hands
No man takes light from his brother till blind at the goal he stands :
Ah, did they know, did they dream of it, counting the cost and the worth ?
The ways of her days, did they seem then good to the new-souled earth ?
Did her heart rejoice, and the might of her spirit exult in her then,
Child yet no child of the night, and motherless mother of men ?
Was it Love brake forth flower-fashion, a bird with gold on his wings,
Lovely, her firstborn passion, and impulse of firstborn things ?
Was Love that nestling indeed that under the plumes of the night
Was hatched and hidden as seed in the furrow, and brought forth bright ?
Was it Love lay shut in the shell world-shaped, having over him there
Black world-wide wings that impel the might of the night through air ?
And bursting his shell as a bird, night shook through her sail-stretched vans,

And her heart as a water was stirred, and its heat was the firstborn man's.
For the waste of the dead void air took form of a world at birth,
And the waters and firmaments were, and light, and the life-giving earth.
The beautiful bird unbegotten that night brought forth without pain
In the fathomless years forgotten whereover the dead gods reign,
Was it love, life, godhead, or fate? we say the spirit is one
That moved on the dark to create out of darkness the stars and the sun.
Before the growth was the grower, and the seed ere the plant was sown;
But what was seed of the sower? and the grain of him, whence was it grown?
Foot after foot ye go back and travail and make yourselves mad;
Blind feet that feel for the track where highway is none to be had.
Therefore the God that ye make you is grievous, and gives not aid,
Because it is but for your sake that the God of your making is made.
Thou and I and he are not gods made men for a span,
But God, if a God there be, is the substance of men which is man.
Our lives are as pulses or pores of his manifold body and breath;
As waves of his sea on the shores where birth is the beacon of death.

We men, the multiform features of man, whatsoever we be,
Recreate him of whom we are creatures, and all we only are he.
Not each man of all men is God, but God is the fruit of the whole ;
Indivisible spirit and blood, indiscernible body from soul.
Not men's but man's is the glory of godhead, the kingdom of time,
The mountainous ages made hoary with snows for the spirit to climb.
A God with the world inwound whose clay to his footsole clings ;
A manifold God fast-bound as with iron of adverse things.
A soul that labours and lives, an emotion, a strenuous breath,
From the flame that its own mouth gives reillumed, and refreshed with death.
In the sea whereof centuries are waves the live God plunges and swims ;
His bed is in all men's graves, but the worm hath not hold on his limbs.
Night puts out not his eyes, nor time sheds change on his head ;
With such fire as the stars of the skies are the roots of his heart are fed.
Men are the thoughts passing through it, the veins that fulfil it with blood,
With spirit of sense to renew it as springs fulfilling a flood.
Men are the heartbeats of man, the plumes that feather his wings,

Storm-worn, since being began, with the wind and thunder of things.
Things are cruel and blind ; their strength detains and deforms :
And the wearying wings of the mind still beat up the stream of their storms.
Still, as one swimming up stream, they strike out blind in the blast,
In thunders of vision and dream, and lightnings of future and past.
We are baffled and caught in the current and bruised upon edges of shoals ;
As weeds or as reeds in the torrent of things are the wind-shaken souls.
Spirit by spirit goes under, a foam-bell's bubble of breath,
That blows and opens in sunder and blurs not the mirror of death.
For a worm or a thorn in his path is a man's soul quenched as a flame ;
For his lust of an hour or his wrath shall the worm and the man be the same.
O God sore stricken of things ! they have wrought him a raiment of pain ;
Can a God shut eyelids and wings at a touch on the nerves of the brain ?
O shamed and sorrowful God, whose force goes out at a blow !
What world shall shake at his nod ? at his coming what wilderness glow ?
What help in the work of his hands ? what light in the track of his feet ?
His days are snowflakes or sands, with cold to consume him and heat.

He is servant with Change for lord, and for wages he hath to his hire
Folly and force, and a sword that devours, and a ravening fire.
From the bed of his birth to his grave he is driven as a wind at their will ;
Lest Change bow down as his slave, and the storm and the sword be still ;
Lest earth spread open her wings to the sunward, and sing with the spheres ;
Lest man be master of things, to prevail on their forces and fears.
By the spirit are things overcome ; they are stark, and the spirit hath breath ;
It hath speech, and their forces are dumb ; it is living, and things are of death.
But they know not the spirit for master, they feel not force from above,
While man makes love to disaster, and woos desolation with love.
Yea, himself too hath made himself chains, and his own hands plucked out his eyes ;
For his own soul only constrains him, his own mouth only denies.
The herds of kings and their hosts and the flocks of the high priests bow
To a master whose face is a ghost's ; O thou that wast God, is it thou ?
Thou madest man in the garden ; thou temptedst man, and he fell ;
Thou gavest him poison and pardon for blood and burnt-offering to sell.
Thou hast sealed thine elect to salvation, fast locked with faith for the key ;

Make now for thyself expiation, and be thine atonement for thee.
Ah, thou that darkenest heaven--ah, thou that bringest a sword—
By the crimes of thine hands unforgiven they beseech thee to hear them, O Lord.
By the balefires of ages that burn for thine incense, by creed and by rood,
By the famine and passion that yearn and that hunger to find of thee food,
By the children that asked at thy throne of the priests that were fat with thine hire
For bread, and thou gavest a stone ; for light, and thou madest them fire ;
By the kiss of thy peace like a snake's kiss, that leaves the soul rotten at root ;
By the savours of gibbets and stakes thou hast planted to bear to thee fruit ;
By torture and terror and treason, that make to thee weapons and wings ;
By thy power upon men for a season, made out of the malice of things ;
O thou that hast built thee a shrine of the madness of man and his shame,
And hast hung in the midst for a sign of his worship the lamp of thy name ;
That hast shown him for heaven in a vision a void world's shadow and shell,
And hast fed thy delight and derision with fire of belief as of hell ;
That hast fleshed on the souls that believe thee the fang of the death-worm fear,
With anguish of dreams to deceive them whose faith cries out in thine ear ;

By the face of the spirit confounded before thee and humbled in dust,
By the dread wherewith life was astounded and shamed out of sense of its trust,
By the scourges of doubt and repentance that fell on the soul at thy nod,
Thou art judged, O judge, and the sentence is gone forth against thee, O God.
Thy slave that slept is awake ; thy slave but slept for a span ;
Yea, man thy slave shall unmake thee, who made thee lord over man.
For his face is set to the east, his feet on the past and its dead ;
The sun rearisen is his priest, and the heat thereof hallows his head.
His eyes take part in the morning ; his spirit outsounding the sea
Asks no more witness or warning from temple or tripod or tree.
He hath set the centuries at union ; the night is afraid at his name ;
Equal with life, in communion with death, he hath found them the same.
Past the wall unsurmounted that bars out our vision with iron and fire
He hath sent forth his soul for the stars to comply with and suns to conspire.
His thought takes flight for the centre wherethrough it hath part in the whole ;
The abysses forbid it not enter : the stars make room for the soul.
Space is the soul's to inherit ; the night is hers as the day ;

Lo, saith man, this is my spirit ; how shall not the worlds make way ?
Space is thought's, and the wonders thereof, and the secret of space ;
Is thought not more than the thunders and lightnings ? shall thought give place ?
Is the body not more than the vesture, the life not more than the meat ?
The will than the word or the gesture, the heart than the hands or the feet ?
Is the tongue not more than the speech is ? the head not more than the crown ?
And if higher than is heaven be the reach of the soul, shall not heaven bow down ?
Time, father of life, and more great than the life it begat and began,
Earth's keeper and heaven's and their fate, lives, thinks, and hath substance in man.
Time's motion that throbs in his blood is the thought that gives heart to the skies,
And the springs of the fire that is food to the sunbeams are light to his eyes.
The minutes that beat with his heart are the words to which worlds keep chime,
And the thought in his pulses is part of the blood and the spirit of time.
He saith to the ages, Give ; and his soul foregoes not her share ;
Who are ye that forbid him to live, and would feed him with heavenlier air ?
Will ye feed him with poisonous dust, and restore him with hemlock for drink,
Till he yield you his soul up in trust, and have heart not to know or to think ?

He hath stirred him, and found out the flaw in his fetters, and cast them behind ;
His soul to his soul is a law, and his mind is a light to his mind.
The seal of his knowledge is sure, the truth and his spirit are wed ;
Men perish, but man shall endure ; lives die, but the life is not dead.
He hath sight of the secrets of season, the roots of the years and the fruits ;
His soul is at one with the reason of things that is sap to the roots.
He can hear in their changes a sound as the conscience of consonant spheres ;
He can see through the years flowing round him the law lying under the years.
Who are ye that would bind him with curses and blind him with vapour of prayer ?
Your might is as night that disperses when light is alive in the air.
The bow of your godhead is broken, the arm of your conquest is stayed ;
Though ye call down God to bear token, for fear of you none is afraid.
Will ye turn back times, and the courses of stars, and the season of souls ?
Shall God's breath dry up the sources that feed time full as it rolls ?
Nay, cry on him then till he show you a sign, till he lift up a rod ;
Hath he made not the nations to know him of old if indeed he be God ?
Is no heat of him left in the ashes of thousands burnt up for his sake ?

Can prayer not rekindle the flashes that shone in his face from the stake?
Cry aloud; for your God is a God and a Saviour; cry, make yourselves lean;
Is he drunk or asleep, that the rod of his wrath is unfelt and unseen?
Is the fire of his old loving-kindness gone out, that his pyres are acold?
Hath he gazed on himself unto blindness, who made men blind to behold?
Cry out, for his kingdom is shaken; cry out, for the people blaspheme;
Cry aloud till his godhead awaken; what doth he to sleep and to dream?
Cry, cut yourselves, gash you with knives and with scourges, heap on to you dust;
Is his life but as other gods' lives? is not this the Lord God of your trust?
Is not this the great God of your sires, that with souls and with bodies was fed,
And the world was on flame with his fires? O fools, he was God, and is dead.
He will hear not again the strong crying of earth in his ears as before,
And the fume of his multitudes dying shall flatter his nostrils no more.
By the spirit he ruled as his slave is he slain who was mighty to slay,
And the stone that is sealed on his grave he shall rise not and roll not away.
Yea, weep to him, lift up your hands; be your eyes as a fountain of tears;
Where he stood there is nothing that stands; if he call, there is no man that hears.

He hath doffed his king's raiment of lies now the wane of his kingdom is come ;
Ears hath he, and hears not ; and eyes, and he sees not ; and mouth, and is dumb.
His red king's raiment is ripped from him naked, his staff broken down ;
And the signs of his empire are stripped from him shuddering ; and where is his crown ?
And in vain by the wellsprings refrozen ye cry for the warmth of his sun—
O God, the Lord God of thy chosen, thy will in thy kingdom be done.
Kingdom and will hath he none in him left him, nor warmth in his breath ;
Till his corpse be cast out of the sun will ye know not the truth of his death ?
Surely, ye say, he is strong, though the times be against him and men ;
Yet a little, ye say, and how long, till he come to show judgment again ?
Shall God then die as the beasts die ? who is it hath broken his rod ?
O God, Lord God of thy priests, rise up now and show thyself God.
They cry out, thine elect, thine aspirants to heaven-ward, whose faith is as flame ;
O thou the Lord God of our tyrants, they call thee, their God, by thy name.
By thy name that in hell-fire was written, and burned at the point of thy sword,
Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten ; thy death is upon thee, O Lord.
And the love-song of earth as thou diest resounds through the wind of her wings—
Glory to Man in the highest ! for Man is the master of things.

THE PILGRIMS

WHO is your lady of love, O ye that pass
Singing? and is it for sorrow of that which was
That ye sing sadly, or dream of what shall be?
For gladly at once and sadly it seems ye sing.
—Our lady of love by you is unbeholden;
For hands she hath none, nor eyes, nor lips, nor golden
Treasure of hair, nor face nor form; but we
That love, we know her more fair than anything

—Is she a queen, having great gifts to give?
—Yea, these; that whoso hath seen her shall not live
Except he serve her sorrowing, with strange pain,
Travail and bloodshedding and bitterer tears;
And when she bids die he shall surely die.
And he shall leave all things under the sky
And go forth naked under sun and rain
And work and wait and watch out all his years.

—Hath she on earth no place of habitation?
—Age to age calling, nation answering nation,
Cries out, Where is she? and there is none to say
For if she be not in the spirit of men,

For if in the inward soul she hath no place,
In vain they cry unto her, seeking her face,
In vain their mouths make much of her ; for they
Cry with vain tongues, till the heart lives again.

—O ye that follow, and have ye no repentance?
For on your brows is written a mortal sentence,
An hieroglyph of sorrow, a fiery sign,
That in your lives ye shall not pause or rest,
Nor have the sure sweet common love, nor keep
Friends and safe days, nor joy of life nor sleep.
—These have we not, who have one thing, the divine
Face and clear eyes of faith and fruitful breast.

—And ye shall die before your thrones be won.
—Yea, and the changed world and the liberal sun
Shall move and shine without us, and we lie
Dead ; but if she too move on earth and live,
But if the old world with all the old irons rent
Laugh and give thanks, shall we be not content?
Nay, we shall rather live, we shall not die,
Life being so little and death so good to give.

—And these men shall forget you.—Yea, but we
Shall be a part of the earth and the ancient sea,
And heaven-high air august, and awful fire,
And all things good ; and no man's heart shall beat
But somewhat in it of our blood once shed
Shall quiver and quicken, as now in us the dead
Blood of men slain and the old same life's desire
Plants in their fiery footprints our fresh feet.

—But ye that might be clothed with all things pleasant,
Ye are foolish that put off the fair soft present,
That clothe yourselves with the cold future air;
When mother and father and tender sister and brother
And the old live love that was shall be as ye,
Dust, and no fruit of loving life shall be.
—She shall be yet who is more than all these were,
Than sister or wife or father unto us or mother.

—Is this worth life, is this, to win for wages?
Lo, the dead mouths of the awful grey-grown ages,
The venerable, in the past that is their prison,
In the outer darkness, in the unopening grave,
Laugh, knowing how many as ye now say have said,
How many, and all are fallen, are fallen and dead:
Shall ye dead rise, and these dead have not risen?
—Not we but she, who is tender and swift to save

—Are ye not weary and faint not by the way,
Seeing night by night devoured of day by day,
Seeing hour by hour consumed in sleepless fire?
Sleepless: and ye too, when shall ye too sleep?
—We are weary in heart and head, in hands and feet,
And surely more than all things sleep were sweet,
Than all things save the inexorable desire
Which whoso knoweth shall neither faint nor weep.

—Is this so sweet that one were fain to follow?
Is this so sure where all men's hopes are hollow.

Even this your dream, that by much tribulation
Ye shall make whole flawed hearts, and bowed necks straight?
—Nay, though our life were blind, our death were fruitless,
Not therefore were the whole world's high hope rootless;
But man to man, nation would turn to nation,
And the old life live, and the old great word be great.

—Pass on then and pass by us and let us be,
For what light think ye after life to see?
And if the world fare better will ye know?
And if man triumph who shall seek you and say?
—Enough of light is this for one life's span,
That all men born are mortal, but not man:
And we men bring death lives by night to sow,
That man may reap and eat and live by day.

ARMAND BARBÈS

I

FIRE out of heaven, a flower of perfect fire,
That where the roots of life are had its root
And where the fruits of time are brought forth fruit;
A faith made flesh, a visible desire,
That heard the yet unbreathing years respire
And speech break forth of centuries that sit mute
Beyond all feebler footprint of pursuit;
That touched the highest of hope, and went up higher;
A heart love-wounded whereto love was law,
A soul reproachless without fear or flaw,
A shining spirit without shadow of shame,
A memory made of all men's love and awe;
Being disembodied, so thou be the same,
What need, O soul, to sign thee with thy name?

II

All woes of all men sat upon thy soul
And all their wrongs were heavy on thy head;
With all their wounds thy heart was pierced and bled,
And in thy spirit as in a mourning scroll

The world's huge sorrows were inscribed by roll,
All theirs on earth who serve and faint for bread,
All banished men's, all theirs in prison dead,
Thy love had heart and sword-hand for the whole.
"This was my day of glory," didst thou say,
When, by the scaffold thou hadst hope to climb
For thy faith's sake, they brought thee respite; "Nay,
I shall not die then, I have missed my day."
O hero, O our help, O head sublime,
Thy day shall be commensurate with time.

QUIA MULTUM AMAVIT

Am I not he that hath made thee and begotten thee,
I, God, the spirit of man?
Wherefore now these eighteen years hast thou forgotten me,
From whom thy life began?
Thy life-blood and thy life-breath and thy beauty,
Thy might of hands and feet,
Thy soul made strong for divinity of duty
And service which was sweet.
Through the red sea brimmed with blood didst thou not follow me,
As one that walks in trance?
Was the storm strong to break or the sea to swallow thee,
When thou wast free and France?
I am Freedom, God and man, O France, that plead with thee;
How long now shall I plead?
Was I not with thee in travail, and in need with thee,
Thy sore travail and need?
Thou wast fairest and first of my virgin-vested daughters,
Fairest and foremost thou;
And thy breast was white, though thy hands were red with slaughters,
Thy breast, a harlot's now.

O foolish virgin and fair among the fallen,
A ruin where satyrs dance,
A garden wasted for beasts to crawl and brawl in,
What hast thou done with France?
Where is she who bared her bosom but to thunder,
Her brow to storm and flame,
And before her face was the red sea cloven in sunder
And all its waves made tame?
And the surf wherein the broad-based rocks were shaking
She saw far off divide,
At the blast of the breath of the battle blown and breaking,
And weight of wind and tide;
And the ravin and the ruin of thronèd nations
And every royal race,
And the kingdoms and kings from the state of their high stations
That fell before her face.
Yea, great was the fall of them, all that rose against her,
From the earth's old-historied heights;
For my hands were fire, and my wings as walls that fenced her,
Mine eyes as pilot-lights.
Not as guerdons given of kings the gifts I brought her,
Not strengths that pass away;
But my heart, my breath of life, O France, O daughter,
I gave thee in that day.
Yea, the heart's blood of a very God I gave thee,
Breathed in thy mouth his breath;

Was my word as a man's, having no more strength
to save thee
From this worse thing than death?
Didst thou dream of it only, the day that I stood
nigh thee,
Was all its light a dream?
When that iron surf roared backwards and went by
thee
Unscathed of storm or stream:
When thy sons rose up and thy young men stood
together,
One equal face of fight,
And my flag swam high as the swimming sea-foam's
feather,
Laughing, a lamp of light?
Ah the lordly laughter and light of it, that lightened
Heaven-high, the heaven's whole length!
Ah the hearts of heroes pierced, the bright lips
whitened
Of strong men in their strength!
Ah the banner-poles, the stretch of straightening
streamers
Straining their full reach out!
Ah the men's hands making true the dreams of
dreamers,
The hopes brought forth in doubt!
Ah the noise of horse, the charge and thunder of
drumming,
And swaying and sweep of swords!
Ah the light that led them through of the world's life
coming,
Clear of its lies and lords!
By the lightning of the lips of guns whose flashes
Made plain the strayed world's way;

By the flame that left her dead old sins in ashes,
Swept out of sight of day ;
By thy children whose bare feet were shod with thunder,
Their bare hands mailed with fire ;
By the faith that went with them, waking fear and wonder,
Heart's love and high desire ;
By the tumult of the waves of nations waking
Blind in the loud wide night ;
By the wind that went on the world's waste waters, making
Their marble darkness white,
As the flash of the flakes of the foam flared lamplike, leaping
From wave to gladdening wave,
Making wide the fast-shut eyes of thraldom sleeping
The sleep of the unclean grave ;
By the fire of equality, terrible, devouring,
Divine, that brought forth good ;
By the lands it purged and wasted and left flowering
With bloom of brotherhood ;
By the lips of fraternity that for love's sake uttered
Fierce words and fires of death,
But the eyes were deep as love's, and the fierce lips fluttered
With love's own living breath ;
By thy weaponed hands, brows helmed, and bare feet spurning
The bared head of a king ;
By the storm of sunrise round thee risen and burning,
Why hast thou done this thing ?
Thou hast mixed thy limbs with the son of a harlot, a stranger,

Mouth to mouth, limb to limb,
Thou, bride of a God, because of the bridesman Danger,
To bring forth seed to him.
For thou thoughtest inly, the terrible bridegroom wakes me,
When I would sleep, to go ;
The fire of his mouth consumes, and the red kiss shakes me,
More bitter than a blow.
Rise up, my beloved, go forth to meet the stranger,
Put forth thine arm, he saith ;
Fear thou not at all though the bridesman should be Danger,
The bridesmaid should be Death.
I the bridegroom, am I not with thee, O bridal nation,
O wedded France, to strive ?
To destroy the sins of the earth with divine devastation,
Till none be left alive ?
Lo her growths of sons, foliage of men and frondage,
Broad boughs of the old-world tree,
With iron of shame and with pruning-hooks of bondage
They are shorn from sea to sea.
Lo, I set wings to thy feet that have been wingless,
Till the utter race be run ;
Till the priestless temples cry to the thrones made kingless,
Are we not also undone ?
Till the immeasurable Republic arise and lighten
Above these quick and dead,
And her awful robes be changed, and her red robes whiten,
Her warring-robes of red.

But thou wouldst not, saying, I am weary and faint
to follow,
Let me lie down and rest ;
And hast sought out shame to sleep with, mire to
wallow,
Yea, a much fouler breast :
And thine own hast made prostitute, sold and shamed
and bared it,
Thy bosom which was mine,
And the bread of the word I gave thee hast soiled,
and shared it
Among these snakes and swine.
As a harlot thou wast handled and polluted,
Thy faith held light as foam,
That thou sentest men thy sons, thy sons imbruted,
To slay thine elder Rome.
Therefore, O harlot, I gave thee to the accurst one,
By night to be defiled,
To thy second shame, and a fouler than the first one,
That got thee first with child.
Yet I know thee turning back now to behold me,
To bow thee and make thee bare,
Not for sin's sake but penitence, by my feet to hold me,
And wipe them with thine hair.
And sweet ointment of thy grief thou hast brought
thy master,
And set before thy lord,
From a box of flawed and broken alabaster,
Thy broken spirit, poured.
And love-offerings, tears and perfumes, hast thou
given me,
To reach my feet and touch ;
Therefore thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee,
Because thou hast loved much.

18 *brumaire*, *an* 78.

GENESIS

In the outer world that was before this earth,
That was before all shape or space was born,
Before the blind first hour of time had birth,
Before night knew the moonlight or the morn;

Yea, before any world had any light,
Or anything called God or man drew breath,
Slowly the strong sides of the heaving night
Moved, and brought forth the strength of life and death.

And the sad shapeless horror increate
That was all things and one thing, without fruit,
Limit, or law; where love was none, nor hate,
Where no leaf came to blossom from no root;

The very darkness that time knew not of,
Nor God laid hand on, nor was man found there,
Ceased, and was cloven in several shapes; above
Light, and night under, and fire, earth, water, and air.

Sunbeams and starbeams, and all coloured things,
All forms and all similitudes began;
And death, the shadow cast by life's wide wings,
And God, the shade cast by the soul of man.

Then between shadow and substance, night and light,
Then between birth and death, and deeds and days,
The illimitable embrace and the amorous fight
That of itself begets, bears, rears, and slays,

The immortal war of mortal things, that is
Labour and life and growth and good and ill,
The mild antiphonies that melt and kiss,
The violent symphonies that meet and kill,

All nature of all things began to be.
But chiefliest in the spirit (beast or man,
Planet of heaven or blossom of earth or sea)
The divine contraries of life began.

For the great labour of growth, being many, is one ;
One thing the white death and the ruddy birth ;
The invisible air and the all-beholden sun,
And barren water and many-childed earth.

And these things are made manifest in men
From the beginning forth unto this day :
Time writes and life records them, and again
Death seals them lest the record pass away.

For if death were not, then should growth not be,
Change, nor the life of good nor evil things ;
Nor were there night at all nor light to see,
Nor water of sweet nor water of bitter springs.

For in each man and each year that is born
Are sown the twin seeds of the strong twin powers ;
The white seed of the fruitful helpful morn,
The black seed of the barren hurtful hours.

And he that of the black seed eateth fruit,
To him the savour as honey shall be sweet ;
And he in whom the white seed hath struck root,
He shall have sorrow and trouble and tears for meat.

And him whose lips the sweet fruit hath made red
In the end men loathe and make his name a rod ;
And him whose mouth on the unsweet fruit hath fed
In the end men follow and know for very God.

And of these twain, the black seed and the white,
All things come forth, endured of men and done ;
And still the day is great with child of night,
And still the black night labours with the sun.

And each man and each year that lives on earth
Turns hither or thither, and hence or thence is fed ;
And as a man before was from his birth,
So shall a man be after among the dead.

TO WALT WHITMAN IN AMERICA

Send but a song oversea for us,
  Heart of their hearts who are free,
Heart of their singer, to be for us
  More than our singing can be ;
Ours, in the tempest at error,
With no light but the twilight of terror ;
  Send us a song oversea !

Sweet-smelling of pine-leaves and grasses,
  And blown as a tree through and through
With the winds of the keen mountain-passes,
  And tender as sun-smitten dew ;
Sharp-tongued as the winter that shakes
The wastes of your limitless lakes,
  Wide-eyed as the sea-line's blue.

O strong-winged soul with prophetic
  Lips hot with the bloodbeats of song,
With tremor of heartstrings magnetic,
  With thoughts as thunders in throng,
With consonant ardours of chords
That pierce men's souls as with swords
  And hale them hearing along,

Make us too music, to be with us
  As a word from a world's heart warm,
To sail the dark as a sea with us,
  Full-sailed, outsinging the storm,
A song to put fire in our ears
Whose burning shall burn up tears,
  Whose sign bid battle reform ;

A note in the ranks of a clarion,
  A word in the wind of cheer,
To consume as with lightning the carrion
  That makes time foul for us here ;
In the air that our dead things infest
A blast of the breath of the west,
  Till east way as west way is clear.

Out of the sun beyond sunset,
  From the evening whence morning shall be,
With the rollers in measureless onset,
  With the van of the storming sea,
With the world-wide wind, with the breath
That breaks ships driven upon death,
  With the passion of all things free,

With the sea-steeds footless and frantic,
  White myriads for death to bestride
In the charge of the ruining Atlantic
  Where deaths by regiments ride,
With clouds and clamours of waters,
With a long note shriller than slaughter's
  On the furrowless fields world-wide,

With terror, with ardour and wonder,
With the soul of the season that wakes
When the weight of a whole year's thunder
In the tidestream of autumn breaks,
Let the flight of the wide-winged word
Come over, come in and be heard,
Take form and fire for our sakes.

For a continent bloodless with travail
Here toils and brawls as it can,
And the web of it who shall unravel
Of all that peer on the plan ;
Would fain grow men, but they grow not,
And fain be free, but they know not
One name for freedom and man ?

One name, not twain for division ;
One thing, not twain, from the birth ;
Spirit and substance and vision,
Worth more than worship is worth ;
Unbeheld, unadored, undivined,
The cause, the centre, the mind,
The secret and sense of the earth.

Here as a weakling in irons,
Here as a weanling in bands,
As a prey that the stake-net environs,
Our life that we looked for stands ;
And the man-child naked and dear,
Democracy, turns on us here
Eyes trembling with tremulous hands.

It sees not what season shall bring to it
  Sweet fruit of its bitter desire ;
Few voices it hears yet sing to it,
  Few pulses of hearts reaspire ;
Foresees not time, nor forehears
The noises of imminent years,
  Earthquake, and thunder, and fire :

When crowned and weaponed and curbless
  It shall walk without helm or shield
The bare burnt furrows and herbless
  Of war's last flame-stricken field,
Till godlike, equal with time,
It stand in the sun sublime,
  In the godhead of man revealed.

Round your people and over them
  Light like raiment is drawn,
Close as a garment to cover them
  Wrought not of mail nor of lawn ;
Here, with hope hardly to wear,
Naked nations and bare
  Swim, sink, strike out for the dawn.

Chains are here, and a prison,
  Kings, and subjects, and shame ;
If the God upon you be arisen,
  How should our songs be the same ?
How, in confusion of change,
How shall we sing, in a strange
  Land, songs praising his name ?

God is buried and dead to us,
  Even the spirit of earth,
Freedom ; so have they said to us,
  Some with mocking and mirth,
Some with heartbreak and tears ;
And a God without eyes, without ears,
  Who shall sing of him, dead in the birth ?

The earth-god Freedom, the lonely
  Face lightening, the footprint unshod,
Not as one man crucified only
  Nor scourged with but one life's rod ;
The soul that is substance of nations,
Reincarnate with fresh generations ;
  The great god Man, which is God.

But in weariest of years and obscurest
  Doth it live not at heart of all things,
The one God and one spirit, a purest
  Life, fed from unstanchable springs ?
Within love, within hatred it is,
And its seed in the stripe as the kiss,
  And in slaves is the germ, and in kings.

Freedom we call it, for holier
  Name of the soul's there is none ;
Surelier it labours, if slowlier,
  Than the metres of star or of sun ;
Slowlier than life into breath,
Surelier than time into death,
  It moves till its labour be done.

Till the motion be done and the measure
  Circling through season and clime,
Slumber and sorrow and pleasure,
  Vision of virtue and crime;
Till consummate with conquering eyes,
A soul disembodied, it rise
  From the body transfigured of time.

Till it rise and remain and take station
  With the stars of the worlds that rejoice;
Till the voice of its heart's exultation
  Be as theirs an invariable voice;
By no discord of evil estranged,
By no pause, by no breach in it changed,
  By no clash in the chord of its choice.

It is one with the world's generations,
  With the spirit, the star, and the sod;
With the kingless and king-stricken nations,
  With the cross, and the chain, and the rod;
The most high, the most secret, most lonely,
The earth-soul Freedom, that only
  Lives, and that only is God.

CHRISTMAS ANTIPHONES

I

IN CHURCH

Thou whose birth on earth
  Angels sang to men,
While thy stars made mirth,
Saviour, at thy birth,
  This day born again ;

As this night was bright
  With thy cradle-ray,
Very light of light,
Turn the wild world's night
  To thy perfect day.

God whose feet made sweet
  Those wild ways they trod,
From thy fragrant feet
Staining field and street
  With the blood of God ;

God whose breast is rest
  In the time of strife,
In thy secret breast
Sheltering souls opprest
  From the heat of life ;

God whose eyes are skies
  Love-lit as with spheres
By the lights that rise
To thy watching eyes,
  Orbèd lights of tears ;

God whose heart hath part
  In all grief that is,
Was not man's the dart
That went through thine heart,
  And the wound not his ?

Where the pale souls wail,
  Held in bonds of death,
Where all spirits quail,
Came thy Godhead pale
  Still from human breath—

Pale from life and strife,
  Wan with manhood, came
Forth of mortal life,
Pierced as with a knife,
  Scarred as with a flame.

Thou the Word and Lord
  In all time and space
Heard, beheld, adored,
With all ages poured
  Forth before thy face,

Lord, what worth in earth
  Drew thee down to die ?
What therein was worth,
Lord, thy death and birth ?
  What beneath thy sky ?

Light above all love
  By thy love was lit,
And brought down the Dove
Feathered from above
  With the wings of it.

From the height of night,
  Was not thine the star
That led forth with might
By no worldly light
  Wise men from afar?

Yet the wise men's eyes
  Saw thee not more clear
Than they saw thee rise
Who in shepherd's guise
  Drew as poor men near.

Yet thy poor endure,
  And are with us yet;
Be thy name a sure
Refuge for thy poor
  Whom men's eyes forget.

Thou whose ways we praise,
  Clear alike and dark,
Keep our works and ways
This and all thy days
  Safe inside thine ark.

Who shall keep thy sheep,
  Lord, and lose not one?
Who save one shall keep,
Lest the shepherds sleep?
  Who beside the Son?

From the grave-deep wave,
  From the sword and flame,
Thou, even thou, shalt save
Souls of king and slave
  Only by thy Name.

Light not born with morn
  Or her fires above,
Jesus virgin-born,
Held of men in scorn,
  Turn their scorn to love.

Thou whose face gives grace
  As the sun's doth heat,
Let thy sunbright face
Lighten time and space
  Here beneath thy feet.

Bid our peace increase,
  Thou that madest morn ;
Bid oppressions cease ;
Bid the night be peace ;
  Bid the day be born.

II

OUTSIDE CHURCH

We whose days and ways
  All the night makes dark,
What day shall we praise
Of these weary days
  That our life-drops mark ?

We whose mind is blind,
  Fed with hope of nought;
Wastes of worn mankind,
Without heart or mind,
  Without meat or thought;

We with strife of life
  Worn till all life cease,
Want, a whetted knife,
Sharpening strife on strife,
  How should we love peace?

Ye whose meat is sweet
  And your wine-cup red,
Us beneath your feet
Hunger grinds as wheat,
  Grinds to make you bread.

Ye whose night is bright
  With soft rest and heat,
Clothed like day with light,
Us the naked night
  Slays from street to street.

Hath your God no rod,
  That ye tread so light?
Man on us as God,
God as man hath trod,
  Trod us down with might.

We that one by one
  Bleed from either's rod.
What for us hath done
Man beneath the sun,
  What for us hath God?

We whose blood is food
  Given your wealth to feed,
From the Christless rood
Red with no God's blood,
  But with man's indeed ;

How shall we that see
  Nightlong overhead
Life, the flowerless tree,
Nailed whereon as we
  Were our fathers dead—

We whose ear can hear,
  Not whose tongue can name,
Famine, ignorance, fear,
Bleeding tear by tear
  Year by year of shame,

Till the dry life die
  Out of bloodless breast,
Out of beamless eye,
Out of mouths that cry
  Till death feed with rest—

How shall we as ye,
  Though ye bid us, pray ?
Though ye call, can we
Hear you call, or see,
  Though ye show us day ?

We whose name is shame,
  We whose souls walk bare,
Shall we call the same
God as ye by name,
  Teach our lips your prayer ?

God, forgive and give,
For His sake who died?
Nay, for ours who live,
How shall we forgive
Thee, then, on our side?

We whose right to light
Heaven's high noon denies,
Whom the blind beams smite
That for you shine bright,
And but burn our eyes,

With what dreams of beams
Shall we build up day,
At what sourceless streams
Seek to drink in dreams
Ere they pass away?

In what street shall meet,
At what market-place,
Your feet and our feet,
With one goal to greet,
Having run one race?

What one hope shall ope
For us all as one
One same horoscope,
Where the soul sees hope
That outburns the sun?

At what shrine what wine,
At what board what bread,
Salt as blood or brine,
Shall we share in sign
How we poor were fed?

In what hour what power
  Shall we pray for morn,
If your perfect hour,
When all day bears flower,
  Not for us is born?

III

BEYOND CHURCH

Ye that weep in sleep,
  Souls and bodies bound,
Ye that all night keep
Watch for change, and weep
  That no change is found;

Ye that cry and die,
  And the world goes on
Without ear or eye,
And the days go by
  Till all days are gone:

Man shall do for you,
  Men the sons of man,
What no God would do
That they sought unto
  While the blind years ran.

Brotherhood of good,
  Equal laws and rights,
Freedom, whose sweet food
Feeds the multitude
  All their days and nights

With the bread full-fed
  Of her body blest
And the soul's wine shed
From her table spread
  Where the world is guest,

Mingling me and thee,
  When like light of eyes
Flashed through thee and me
Truth shall make us free,
  Liberty make wise ;

These are they whom day
  Follows and gives light
Whence they see to slay
Night, and burn away
  All the seed of night.

What of thine and mine,
  What of want and wealth,
When one faith is wine
For my heart and thine
  And one draught is health ?

For no sect elect
  Is the soul's wine poured
And her table decked ;
Whom should man reject
  From man's common board ?

Gods refuse and choose,
  Grudge and sell and spare ;
None shall man refuse,
None of all men lose,
  None leave out of care.

No man's might of sight
Knows that hour before ;
No man's hand hath might
To put back that light
For one hour the more.

Not though all men call,
Kneeling with void hands,
Shall they see light fall
Till it come for all
Tribes of men and lands.

No desire brings fire
Down from heaven by prayer,
Though man's vain desire
Hang faith's wind-struck lyre
Out in tuneless air.

One hath breath and saith
What the tune shall be—
Time, who puts his breath
Into life and death,
Into earth and sea.

To and fro years flow,
Fill their tides and ebb,
As his fingers go
Weaving to and fro
One unfinished web.

All the range of change
Hath its bounds therein,
All the lives that range
All the byways strange
Named of death or sin.

Star from far to star
  Speaks, and white moons wake,
Watchful from afar
What the night's ways are
  For the morning's sake.

Many names and flames
  Pass and flash and fall,
Night-begotten names,
And the night reclaims,
  As she bare them, all.

But the sun is one,
  And the sun's name Right;
And when light is none
Saving of the sun,
  All men shall have light.

All shall see and be
  Parcel of the morn;
Ay, though blind were we,
None shall choose but see
  When that day is born.

A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

To Joseph Mazzini

Send the stars light, but send not love to me.
Shelley.

1

Out of the dawning heavens that hear
Young wings and feet of the new year
Move through their twilight, and shed round
Soft showers of sound,
Soothing the season with sweet rain,
If greeting come to make me fain,
What is it I can send again?

2

I know not if the year shall send
Tidings to usward as a friend,
And salutation, and such things
Bear on his wings
As the soul turns and thirsts unto
With hungering eyes and lips that sue
For that sweet food which makes all new.

3

I know not if his light shall be
Darkness, or else light verily:

I know but that it will not part
Heart's faith from heart,
Truth from the trust in truth, nor hope
From sight of days unscaled that ope
Beyond one poor year's horoscope.

4

That faith in love which love's self gives,
O master of my spirit, lives,
Having in presence unremoved
Thine head beloved,
The shadow of thee, the semitone
Of thy voice heard at heart and known,
The light of thee not set nor flown.

5

Seas, lands, and hours, can these divide
Love from love's service, side from side,
Though no sound pass nor breath be heard
Of one good word?
To send back words of trust to thee
Were to send wings to love, when he
With his own strong wings covers me.

6

Who shall teach singing to the spheres,
Or motion to the flight of years?
Let soul with soul keep hand in hand
And understand,
As in one same abiding-place
We keep one watch for one same face
To rise in some short sacred space.

7

And all space midway is but nought
To keep true heart from faithful thought,
As under twilight stars we wait
By Time's shut gate
Till the slow soundless hinges turn,
And through the depth of years that yearn
The face of the Republic burn.

1870.

MATER DOLOROSA

Citoyen, lui dit Enjoiras, ma mère, c'est la République.
Les Misérables.

Who is this that sits by the way, by the wild way-side,
In a rent stained raiment, the robe of a cast-off bride,
In the dust, in the rainfall sitting, with soiled feet bare,
With the night for a garment upon her, with torn wet hair?
She is fairer of face than the daughters of men, and her eyes,
Worn through with her tears, are deep as the depth of skies.

This is she for whose sake being fallen, for whose abject sake,
Earth groans in the blackness of darkness, and men's hearts break.
This is she for whose love, having seen her, the men that were
Poured life out as water, and shed their souls upon air.
This is she for whose glory their years were counted as foam;
Whose face was a light upon Greece, was a fire upon Rome.

Is it now not surely a vain thing, a foolish and vain,
To sit down by her, mourn to her, serve her, partake
in the pain?
She is grey with the dust of time on his manifold
ways,
Where her faint feet stumble and falter through year-
long days.
Shall she help us at all, O fools, give fruit or give
fame,
Who herself is a name despised, a rejected name?

We have not served her for guerdon. If any do so,
That his mouth may be sweet with such honey, we
care not to know.
We have drunk from a wine-unsweetened, a perilous
cup,
A draught very bitter. The kings of the earth stood
up,
And the rulers took counsel together, to smite her
and slay;
And the blood of her wounds is given us to drink to-
day.

Can these bones live? or the leaves that are dead
leaves bud?
Or the dead blood drawn from her veins be in your
veins blood?
Will ye gather up water again that was drawn and
shed?
In the blood is the life of the veins, and her veins are
dead.
For the lives that are over are over, and past things
past;
She had her day, and it is not; was first, and is last.

Is it nothing unto you then, all ye that pass by,
If her breath be left in her lips, if she live now or die?
Behold now, O people, and say if she be not fair,
Whom your fathers followed to find her, with praise and prayer,
And rejoiced, having found her, though roof they had none nor bread;
But ye care not; what is it to you if her day be dead?

It was well with our fathers; their sound was in all men's lands;
There was fire in their hearts, and the hunger of fight in their hands.
Naked and strong they went forth in her strength like flame,
For her love's and her name's sake of old, her republican name.
But their children, by kings made quiet, by priests made wise,
Love better the heat of their hearths than the light of her eyes.

Are they children of these thy children indeed, who have sold,
O golden goddess, the light of thy face for gold?
Are they sons indeed of the sons of thy dayspring of hope,
Whose lives are in fief of an emperor, whose souls of a Pope?
Hide then thine head, O belovèd; thy time is done;
Thy kingdom is broken in heaven, and blind thy sun.

What sleep is upon you, to dream she indeed shall rise,
When the hopes are dead in her heart as the tears in her eyes?

If ye sing of her dead, will she stir? if ye weep for her, weep?
Come away now, leave her; what hath she to do but sleep?
But ye that mourn are alive, and have years to be;
And life is good, and the world is wiser than we.

Yea, wise is the world and mighty, with years to give,
And years to promise; but how long now shall it live?
And foolish and poor is faith, and her ways are bare,
Till she find the way of the sun, and the morning air.
In that hour shall this dead face shine as the face of the sun,
And the soul of man and her soul and the world's be one.

MATER TRIUMPHALIS

Mother of man's time-travelling generations,
Breath of his nostrils, heartblood of his heart,
God above all Gods worshipped of all nations,
Light above light, law beyond law, thou art.

Thy face is as a sword smiting in sunder
Shadows and chains and dreams and iron things;
The sea is dumb before thy face, the thunder
Silent, the skies are narrower than thy wings.

Angels and Gods, spirit and sense, thou takest
In thy right hand as drops of dust or dew;
The temples and the towers of time thou breakest,
His thoughts and words and works, to make them new.

All we have wandered from thy ways, have hidden
Eyes from thy glory and ears from calls they heard;
Called of thy trumpets vainly, called and chidden,
Scourged of thy speech and wounded of thy word.

We have known thee and have not known thee; stood beside thee,
Felt thy lips breathe, set foot where thy feet trod,
Loved and renounced and worshipped and denied thee,
As though thou wert but as another God.

"One hour for sleep," we said, "and yet one other;
All day we served her, and who shall serve by night?"
Not knowing of thee, thy face not knowing, O mother,
O light wherethrough the darkness is as light.

Men that forsook thee hast thou not forsaken,
Races of men that knew not hast thou known;
Nations that slept thou hast doubted not to waken,
Worshippers of strange Gods to make thine own.

All old grey histories hiding thy clear features,
O secret spirit and sovereign, all men's tales,
Creeds woven of men thy children and thy creatures,
They have woven for vestures of thee and for veils.

Thine hands, without election or exemption,
Feed all men fainting from false peace or strife,
O thou, the resurrection and redemption,
The godhead and the manhood and the life.

Thy wings shadow the waters; thine eyes lighten
The horror of the hollows of the night;
The depths of the earth and the dark places brighten
Under thy feet, whiter than fire is white.

Death is subdued to thee, and hell's bands broken;
Where thou art only is heaven; who hears not thee,
Time shall not hear him; when men's names are spoken,
A nameless sign of death shall his name be.

Deathless shall be the death, the name be nameless ;
Sterile of stars his twilight time of breath ;
With fire of hell shall shame consume him shameless,
And dying, all the night darken his death.

The years are as thy garments, the world's ages
As sandals bound and loosed from thy swift feet ;
Time serves before thee, as one that hath for wages
Praise or shame only, bitter words or sweet.

Thou sayest "Well done," and all a century kindles ;
Again thou sayest "Depart from sight of me,"
And all the light of face of all men dwindles,
And the age is as the broken glass of thee.

The night is as a seal set on men's faces,
On faces fallen of men that take no light,
Nor give light in the deeps of the dark places,
Blind things, incorporate with the body of night.

Their souls are serpents winterbound and frozen,
Their shame is as a tame beast, at their feet
Couched ; their cold lips deride thee and thy chosen,
Their lying lips made grey with dust for meat.

Then when their time is full and days run over,
The splendour of thy sudden brow made bare
Darkens the morning ; thy bared hands uncover
The veils of light and night and the awful air.

And the world naked as a new-born maiden
Stands virginal and splendid as at birth,
With all thine heaven of all its light unladen,
Of all its love unburdened all thine earth.

For the utter earth and the utter air of heaven
And the extreme depth is thine and the extreme height;
Shadows of things and veils of ages riven
Are as men's kings unkingdomed in thy sight.

Through the iron years, the centuries brazen-gated,
By the ages' barred impenetrable doors,
From the evening to the morning have we waited,
Should thy foot haply sound on the awful floors.

The floors untrodden of the sun's feet glimmer,
The star-unstricken pavements of the night;
Do the lights burn inside? the lights wax dimmer
On festal faces withering out of sight.

The crowned heads lose the light on them; it may be
Dawn is at hand to smite the loud feast dumb;
To blind the torch-lit centuries till the day be,
The feasting kingdoms till thy kingdom come.

Shall it not come? deny they or dissemble,
Is it not even as lightning from on high
Now? and though many a soul close eyes and tremble,
How should they tremble at all who love thee as I?

I am thine harp between thine hands, O mother!
All my strong chords are strained with love of thee.
We grapple in love and wrestle, as each with other
Wrestle the wind and the unreluctant sea.

I am no courtier of thee sober-suited,
Who loves a little for a little pay.
Me not thy winds and storms nor thrones disrooted
Nor molten crowns nor thine own sins dismay.

Sinned hast thou sometime, therefore art thou sinless ;
Stained hast thou been, who art therefore without stain ;
Even as man's soul is kin to thee, but kinless
Thou, in whose womb Time sows the all-various grain.

I do not bid thee spare me, O dreadful mother !
I pray thee that thou spare not, of thy grace.
How were it with me then, if ever another
Should come to stand before thee in this my place ?

I am the trumpet at thy lips, thy clarion
Full of thy cry, sonorous with thy breath ;
The graves of souls born worms and creeds grown carrion
Thy blast of judgment fills with fires of death.

Thou art the player whose organ-keys are thunders,
And I beneath thy foot the pedal prest ;
Thou art the ray whereat the rent night sunders,
And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.

I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,
As haze in sunrise on the red sea-line ;
But thou from dawn to sunsetting shalt cherish
The thoughts that led and souls that lighted mine.

Reared between night and noon and truth and error,
Each twilight-travelling bird that trills and screams
Sickens at midday, nor can face for terror
The imperious heaven's inevitable extremes.

I have no spirit of skill with equal fingers
At sign to sharpen or to slacken strings ;
I keep no time of song with gold-perched singers
And chirp of linnets on the wrists of kings.

I am thy storm-thrush of the days that darken,
Thy petrel in the foam that bears thy bark
To port through night and tempest ; if thou hearken,
My voice is in thy heaven before the lark.

My song is in the mist that hides thy morning,
My cry is up before the day for thee ;
I have heard thee and beheld thee and give warning,
Before thy wheels divide the sky and sea.

Birds shall wake with thee voiced and feathered fairer,
To see in summer what I see in spring ;
I have eyes and heart to endure thee, O thunder-bearer,
And they shall be who shall have tongues to sing.

I have love at least, and have not fear, and part not
From thine unnavigable and wingless way ;
Thou tarriest, and I have not said thou art not,
Nor all thy night long have denied thy day.

Darkness to daylight shall lift up thy pæan,
Hill to hill thunder, vale cry back to vale,
With wind-notes as of eagles Æschylean,
And Sappho singing in the nightingale.

Sung to by mighty sons of dawn and daughters,
Of this night's songs thine ear shall keep but one;
That supreme song which shook the channelled waters,
And called thee skyward as God calls the sun.

Come, though all heaven again be fire above thee ;
Though death before thee come to clear thy sky ;
Let us but see in his thy face who love thee ;
Yea, though thou slay us, arise and let us die.

A MARCHING SONG

We mix from many lands,
We march for very far;
In hearts and lips and hands
Our staffs and weapons are;
The light we walk in darkens sun and moon and star

It doth not flame and wane
With years and spheres that roll,
Storm cannot shake nor stain
The strength that makes it whole,
The fire that moulds and moves it of the sovereign soul.

We are they that have to cope
With time till time retire;
We live on hopeless hope,
We feed on tears and fire;
Time, foot by foot, gives back before our sheer desire.

From the edge of harsh derision,
From discord and defeat,
From doubt and lame division,
We pluck the fruit and eat;
And the mouth finds it bitter, and the spirit sweet.

We strive with time at wrestling
Till time be on our side
And hope, our plumeless nestling,
A full-fledged eaglet ride
Down the loud length of storm its windward wings divide.

We are girt with our belief,
Clothed with our will and crowned ;
Hope, fear, delight, and grief,
Before our will give ground ;
Their calls are in our ears as shadows of dead sound.

All but the heart forsakes us,
All fails us but the will ;
Keen treason tracks and takes us
In pits for blood to fill ;
Friend falls from friend, and faith for faith lays wait to kill.

Out under moon and stars
And shafts of the urgent sun
Whose face on prison-bars
And mountain-heads is one,
Our march is everlasting till time's march be done.

Whither we know, and whence,
And dare not care wherethrough.
Desires that urge the sense,
Fears changing old with new,
Perils and pains beset the ways we press into ;

Earth gives us thorns to tread,
And all her thorns are trod;
Through lands burnt black and red
We pass with feet unshod;
Whence we would be man shall not keep us, nor man's God.

Through the great desert beasts
Howl at our backs by night,
And thunder-forging priests
Blow their dead bale-fires bright,
And on their broken anvils beat out bolts for fight.

Inside their sacred smithies
Though hot the hammer rings,
Their steel links snap like withies,
Their chains like twisted strings,
Their surest fetters are as plighted words of kings.

O nations undivided,
O single people and free,
We dreamers, we derided,
We mad blind men that see,
We bear you witness ere ye come that ye shall be.

Ye sitting among tombs,
Ye standing round the gate,
Whom fire-mouthed war consumes,
Or cold-lipped peace bids wait,
All tombs and bars shall open, every grave and grate.

The locks shall burst in sunder,
The hinges shrieking spin,
When time, whose hand is thunder,
Lays hand upon the pin,
And shoots the bolts reluctant, bidding all men in.

These eyeless times and earless,
Shall these not see and hear,
And all their hearts burn fearless
That were afrost for fear?
Is day not hard upon us, yea, not our day near?

France! from its grey dejection
Make manifest the red
Tempestuous resurrection
Of thy most sacred head!
Break thou the covering cerecloths; rise up from the dead.

And thou, whom sea-walls sever
From lands unwalled with seas,
Wilt thou endure for ever,
O Milton's England, these?
Thou that wast his Republic, wilt thou clasp their knees?

These royalties rust-eaten,
These worm-corroded lies,
That keep thine head storm-beaten
And sunlike strength of eyes
From the open heaven and air of intercepted skies;

These princelings with gauze winglets
That buzz in the air unfurled,
These summer-swarming kinglets,
These thin worms crowned and curled,
That bask and blink and warm themselves about the world;

These fanged meridian vermin,
Shrill gnats that crowd the dusk,
Night-moths whose nestling ermine
Smells foul of mould and musk,
Blind flesh-flies hatched by dark and hampered in their husk ;

These honours without honour,
These ghost-like gods of gold,
This earth that wears upon her
To keep her heart from cold
No memory more of men that brought it fire of old ;

These limbs, supine, unbuckled,
In rottenness of rest,
These sleepy lips blood-suckled
And satiate of thy breast,
These dull wide mouths that drain thee dry and call thee blest ;

These masters of thee mindless
That wear thee out of mind,
These children of thee kindless
That use thee out of kind,
Whose hands strew gold before thee and contempt behind ;

Who have turned thy name to laughter,
Thy sea-like sounded name
That now none hearkens after
For faith in its free fame,
Who have robbed thee of thy trust and given thee of their shame ;

These hours that mock each other,
These years that kill and die,
Are these thy gains, our mother,
For all thy gains thrown by?
Is this that end whose promise made thine heart so high?

With empire and with treason
The first right hand made fast,
But in man's nobler season
To put forth help the last,
Love turns from thee, and memory disavows thy past.

Lest thine own sea disclaim thee,
Lest thine own sons despise,
Lest lips shoot out that name thee
And seeing thee men shut eyes,
Take thought with all thy people, turn thine head and rise.

Turn thee, lift up thy face;
What ails thee to be dead?
Ask of thyself for grace,
Seek of thyself for bread,
And who shall starve or shame thee, blind or bruise thine head?

The same sun in thy sight,
The same sea in thine ears,
That saw thine hour at height,
That sang thy song of years,
Behold and hearken for thee, knowing thy hopes and fears.

O people, O perfect nation,
O England that shall be,
How long till thou take station?
How long till thralls live free?
How long till all thy soul be one with all thy sea?

Ye that from south to north,
Ye that from east to west,
Stretch hands of longing forth
And keep your eyes from rest,
Lo, when ye will, we bring you gifts of what is best.

From the awful northland pines
That skirt their wan dim seas
To the ardent Apennines
And sun-struck Pyrenees,
One frost on all their frondage bites the blossoming trees.

The leaves look up for light,
For heat of helpful air;
The trees of oldest height
And thin storm-shaken hair
Seek with gaunt hands up heavenward if the sun be there.

The woods where souls walk lonely,
The forests girt with night,
Desire the day-star only
And firstlings of the light
Not seen of slaves nor shining in their masters' sight.

We have the morning star,
O foolish people, O kings!
With us the day-springs are,
Even all the fresh day-springs;
For us, and with us, all the multitudes of things.

O sorrowing hearts of slaves,
We heard you beat from far!
We bring the light that saves,
We bring the morning star;
Freedom's good things we bring you, whence all good things are.

With us the winds and fountains
And lightnings live in tune;
The morning-coloured mountains
That burn into the noon,
The mist's mild veil on valleys muffled from the moon:

The thunder-darkened highlands
And lowlands hot with fruit,
Sea-bays and shoals and islands,
And cliffs that foil man's foot,
And all the flower of large-limbed life and all the root:

The clangour of sea-eagles
That teach the morning mirth
With baying of heaven's beagles
That seek their prey on earth,
By sounding strait and channel, gulf and reach and firth.

With us the fields and rivers,
The grass that summer thrills,
The haze where morning quivers,
The peace at heart of hills,
The sense that kindles nature, and the soul that fills.

With us all natural sights,
All notes of natural scale ;
With us the starry lights ;
With us the nightingale ;
With us the heart and secret of the worldly tale.

The strife of things and beauty,
The fire and light adored,
Truth, and life-lightening duty,
Love without crown or sword,
That by his might and godhead makes man god and lord.

These have we, these are ours,
That no priests give nor kings ;
The honey of all these flowers,
The heart of all these springs ;
Ours, for where freedom lives not, there live no good things.

Rise, ere the dawn be risen ;
Come, and be all souls fed ;
From field and street and prison
Come, for the feast is spread ;
Live, for the truth is living ; wake, for night is dead.

SIENA

Inside this northern summer's fold
The fields are full of naked gold,
Broadcast from heaven on lands it loves;
The green veiled air is full of doves;
Soft leaves that sift the sunbeams let
Light on the small warm grasses wet
Fall in short broken kisses sweet,
And break again like waves that beat
Round the sun's feet.

But I, for all this English mirth
Of golden-shod and dancing days,
And the old green-girt sweet-hearted earth,
Desire what here no spells can raise.
Far hence, with holier heavens above,
The lovely city of my love
Bathes deep in the sun-satiate air
That flows round no fair thing more fair
Her beauty bare.

There the utter sky is holier, there
More pure the intense white height of air,
More clear men's eyes that mine would meet,
And the sweet springs of things more sweet.

There for this one warm note of doves
A clamour of a thousand loves
Storms the night's ear, the day's assails,
From the tempestuous nightingales,
And fills, and fails.

O gracious city well-beloved,
Italian, and a maiden crowned,
Siena, my feet are no more moved
Toward thy strange-shapen mountain-bound:
But my heart in me turns and moves,
O lady loveliest of my loves,
Toward thee, to lie before thy feet
And gaze from thy fair fountain-seat
Up the sheer street;

And the house midway hanging see
That saw Saint Catherine bodily,
Felt on its floors her sweet feet move,
And the live light of fiery love
Burn from her beautiful strange face,
As in the sanguine sacred place
Where in pure hands she took the head
Severed, and with pure lips still red
Kissed the lips dead.

For years through, sweetest of the saints,
In quiet without cease she wrought,
Till cries of men and fierce complaints
From outward moved her maiden thought;
And prayers she heard and sighs toward France,
"God, send us back deliverance,
Send back thy servant, lest we die!"
With an exceeding bitter cry
They smote the sky.

Then in her sacred saving hands
She took the sorrows of the lands,
With maiden palms she lifted up
The sick time's blood-embittered cup,
And in her virgin garment furled
The faint limbs of a wounded world.
Clothed with calm love and clear desire,
She went forth in her soul's attire,
A missive fire.

Across the might of men that strove
It shone, and over heads of kings ;
And molten in red flames of love
Were swords and many monstrous things ;
And shields were lowered, and snapt were spears,
And sweeter-tuned the clamorous years ;
And faith came back, and peace, that were
Fled ; for she bade, saying, " Thou, God's heir,
Hast thou no care ?

" Lo, men lay waste thine heritage
Still, and much heathen people rage
Against thee, and devise vain things.
What comfort in the face of kings,
What counsel is there ? Turn thine eyes
And thine heart from them in like wise ;
Turn thee unto thine holy place
To help us that of God for grace
Require thy face.

" For who shall hear us if not thou
In a strange land ? what doest thou there ?
Thy sheep are spoiled, and the ploughers plough
Upon us ; why hast thou no care

For all this, and beyond strange hills
Liest unregardful what snow chills
Thy foldless flock, or what rains beat?
Lo, in thine ears, before thy feet,
Thy lost sheep bleat.

"And strange men feed on faultless lives,
And there is blood, and men put knives,
Shepherd, unto the young lamb's throat;
And one hath eaten, and one smote,
And one had hunger and is fed
Full of the flesh of these, and red
With blood of these as who drinks wine
And God knoweth, who hath sent thee a sign,
If these were thine."

But the Pope's heart within him burned,
So that he rose up, seeing the sign,
And came among them; but she turned
Back to her daily way divine,
And fed her faith with silent things,
And lived her life with curbed white wings,
And mixed herself with heaven and died:
And now on the sheer city-side
Smiles like a bride.

You see her in the fresh clear gloom,
Where walls shut out the flame and bloom
Of full-breathed summer, and the roof
Keeps the keen ardent air aloof
And sweet weight of the violent sky:
There bodily beheld on high,
She seems as one hearing in tune
Heaven within heaven, at heaven's full noon,
In sacred swoon:

A solemn swoon of sense that aches
With imminent blind heat of heaven,
While all the wide-eyed spirit wakes,
Vigilant of the supreme Seven,
Whose choral flames in God's sight move,
Made unendurable with love,
That without wind or blast of breath
Compels all things through life and death
Whither God saith.

There on the dim side-chapel wall
Thy mighty touch memorial,
Razzi, raised up, for ages dead,
And fixed for us her heavenly head:
And, rent with plaited thorn and rod,
Bared the live likeness of her God
To men's eyes turning from strange lands,
Where, pale from thine immortal hands,
Christ wounded stands;

And the blood blots his holy hair
And white brows over hungering eyes
That plead against us, and the fair
Mute lips forlorn of words or sighs
In the great torment that bends down
His bruised head with the bloomless crown,
White as the unfruitful thorn-flower,
A God beheld in dreams that were
Beheld of her.

In vain on all these sins and years
Falls the sad blood, fall the slow tears;
In vain poured forth as watersprings,
Priests, on your altars, and ye, kings,

About your seats of sanguine gold ;
Still your God, spat upon and sold,
Bleeds at your hands ; but now is gone
All his flock from him saving one ;
Judas alone.

Surely your race it was that he,
O men signed backward with his name,
Beholding in Gethsemane
Bled the red bitter sweat of shame,
Knowing how the word of Christian should
Mean to men evil and not good,
Seem to men shameful for your sake,
Whose lips, for all the prayers they make,
Man's blood must slake.

But blood nor tears ye love not, you
That my love leads my longing to,
Fair as the world's old faith of flowers,
O golden goddesses of ours !
From what Idalian rose-pleasance
Hath Aphrodite bidden glance
The lovelier lightnings of your feet ?
From what sweet Paphian sward or seat
Led you more sweet ?

O white three sisters, three as one,
With flowerlike arms for flowery bands
Your linked limbs glitter like the sun,
And time lies beaten at your hands.
Time and wild years and wars and men
Pass, and ye care not whence or when ;
With calm lips over sweet for scorn,
Ye watch night pass, O children born
Of the old-world morn.

Ah, in this strange and shrineless place,
What doth a goddess, what a Grace,
Where no Greek worships her shrined limbs
With wreaths and Cytherean hymns?
Where no lute makes luxurious
The adoring airs in Amathus,
Till the maid, knowing her mother near,
Sobs with love, aching with sweet fear?
What do ye here?

For the outer land is sad, and wears
A raiment of a flaming fire;
And the fierce fruitless mountain stairs
Climb, yet seem wroth and loth to aspire,
Climb, and break, and are broken down,
And through their clefts and crests the town
Looks west and sees the dead sun lie,
In sanguine death that stains the sky
With angry dye.

And from the war-worn wastes without
In twilight, in the time of doubt,
One sound comes of one whisper, where
Moved with low motions of slow air
The great trees nigh the castle swing
In the sad coloured evening;
"*Ricorditi di me, che son*
La Pia"—that small sweet word alone
Is not yet gone.

"*Ricorditi di me*"—the sound
Sole out of deep dumb days remote
Across the fiery and fatal ground
Comes tender as a hurt bird's note

To where, a ghost with empty hands,
A woe-worn ghost, her palace stands
In the mid city, where the strong
Bells turn the sunset air to song,
And the towers throng.

With other face, with speech the same,
A mightier maiden's likeness came
Late among mourning men that slept,
A sacred ghost that went and wept,
White as the passion-wounded Lamb,
Saying, "Ah, remember me, that am
Italia." (From deep sea to sea
Earth heard, earth knew her, that this was she.)
"*Ricorditi.*

"Love made me of all things fairest thing,
And Hate unmade me; this knows he
Who with God's sacerdotal ring
Enringed mine hand, espousing me."
Yea, in thy myriad-mooded woe,
Yea, Mother, hast thou not said so?
Have not our hearts within us stirred,
O thou most holiest, at thy word?
Have we not heard?

As this dead tragic land that she
Found deadly, such was time to thee;
Years passed thee withering in the red
Maremma, years that deemed thee dead,
Ages that sorrowed or that scorned;
And all this while though all they mourned
Thou sawest the end of things unclean,
And the unborn that should see thee a queen.
Have we not seen?

The weary poet, thy sad son,
Upon thy soil, under thy skies,
Saw all Italian things save one—
Italia; this thing missed his eyes;
The old mother-might, the breast, the face,
That reared, that lit the Roman race;
This not Leopardi saw; but we,
What is it, Mother, that we see,
What if not thee?

Look thou from Siena southward home,
Where the priest's pall hangs rent on Rome,
And through the red rent swaddling-bands
Towards thine she strains her labouring hands.
Look thou and listen, and let be
All the dead quick, all the bond free;
In the blind eyes let there be sight;
In the eighteen centuries of the night
Let there be light.

Bow down the beauty of thine head,
Sweet, and with lips of living breath
Kiss thy sons sleeping and thy dead,
That there be no more sleep or death.
Give us thy light, thy might, thy love,
Whom thy face seen afar above
Drew to thy feet; and when, being free,
Thou hast blest thy children born to thee,
Bless also me.

Me that when others played or slept
Sat still under thy cross and wept;
Me who so early and unaware
Felt fall on bent bared brows and hair

(Thin drops of the overflowing flood !)
The bitter blessing of thy blood ;
The sacred shadow of thy pain,
Thine, the true maiden-mother, slain
And raised again.

Me consecrated, if I might,
To praise thee, or to love at least,
O mother of all men's dear delight,
Thou madest a choral-souled boy-priest,
Before my lips had leave to sing,
Or my hands hardly strength to cling
About the intolerable tree
Whereto they had nailed my heart and thee
And said, " Let be."

For to thee too the high Fates gave
Grace to be sacrificed and save,
That being arisen, in the equal sun,
God and the People should be one;
By those red roads thy footprints trod,
Man more divine, more human God,
Saviour ; that where no light was known
But darkness, and a daytime flown,
Light should be shown.

Let there be light, O Italy !
For our feet falter in the night.
O lamp of living years to be,
O light of God, let there be light !
Fill with a love keener than flame
Men sealed in spirit with thy name,
The cities and the Roman skies,
Where men with other than man's eyes
Saw thy sun rise.

For theirs thou wast and thine were they
Whose names outshine thy very day ;
For they are thine and theirs thou art
Whose blood beats living in man's heart,
Remembering ages fled and dead
Wherein for thy sake these men bled ;
They that saw Trebia, they that see
Mentana, they in years to be
That shall see thee.

For thine are all of us, and ours
  Thou ; till the seasons bring to birth
A perfect people, and all the powers
  Be with them that bear fruit on earth ;
Till the inner heart of man be one
With freedom, and the sovereign sun ;
And Time, in likeness of a guide,
Lead the Republic as a bride
Up to God's side.

COR CORDIUM

O HEART of hearts, the chalice of love's fire,
Hid round with flowers and all the bounty of bloom ;
O wonderful and perfect heart, for whom
The lyrist liberty made life a lyre ;
O heavenly heart, at whose most dear desire
Dead love, living and singing, cleft his tomb,
And with him risen and regent in death's room
All day thy choral pulses rang full choir ;
O heart whose beating blood was running song,
O sole thing sweeter than thine own songs were,
Help us for thy free love's sake to be free,
True for thy truth's sake, for thy strength's sake strong,
Till very liberty make clean and fair
The nursing earth as the sepulchral sea.

IN SAN LORENZO

Is thine hour come to wake, O slumbering Night?
Hath not the Dawn a message in thine ear?
Though thou be stone and sleep, yet shalt thou hear
When the word falls from heaven—Let there be light.
Thou knowest we would not do thee the despite
To wake thee while the old sorrow and shame were near;
We spake not loud for thy sake, and for fear
Lest thou shouldst lose the rest that was thy right,
The blessing given thee that was thine alone,
The happiness to sleep and to be stone:
Nay, we kept silence of thee for thy sake
Albeit we knew thee alive, and left with thee
The great good gift to feel not nor to see;
But will not yet thine Angel bid thee wake?

TIRESIAS

PART I

It is an hour before the hour of dawn.
Set in mine hand my staff and leave me here
Outside the hollow house that blind men fear,
More blind than I who live on life withdrawn
And feel on eyes that see not but foresee
The shadow of death which clothes Antigone.

Here lay her living body that here lies
Dead, if man living know what thing is death,
If life be all made up of blood and breath,
And no sense be save as of ears and eyes.
But heart there is not, tongue there is not found,
To think or sing what verge hath life or bound.

In the beginning when the powers that made
The young child man a little loved him, seeing
His joy of life and fair face of his being,
And bland and laughing with the man-child played,
As friends they saw on our divine one day
King Cadmus take to queen Harmonia.

The strength of soul that builds up as with hands
Walls spiritual and towers and towns of thought
Which only fate, not force, can bring to nought,
Took then to wife the light of all men's lands,
War's child and love's, most sweet and wise and strong,
Order of things and rule and guiding song.

It was long since : yea, even the sun that saw
Remembers hardly what was, nor how long.
And now the wise heart of the worldly song
Is perished, and the holy hand of law
Can set no tune on time, nor help again
The power of thought to build up life for men.

Yea, surely are they now transformed or dead,
And sleep below this world, where no sun warms,
Or move about it now in formless forms
Incognizable, and all their lordship fled ;
And where they stood up singing crawl and hiss,
With fangs that kill behind their lips that kiss.

Yet though her marriage-garment, seeming fair,
Was dyed in sin and woven of jealousy
To turn their seed to poison, time shall see
The gods reissue from them, and repair
Their broken stamp of godhead, and again
Thought and wise love sing words of law to men.

I, Tiresias the prophet, seeing in Thebes
Much evil, and the misery of men's hands
Who sow with fruitless wheat the stones and sands,
With fruitful thorns the fallows and warm glebes,

Bade their hands hold lest worse hap came to pass ;
But which of you had heed of Tiresias ?

I am as Time's self in mine own wearied mind,
Whom the strong heavy-footed years have led
From night to night and dead men unto dead,
And from the blind hope to the memory blind ;
For each man's life is woven, as Time's life is,
Of blind young hopes and old blind memories.

I am a soul outside of death and birth.
I see before me and afterward I see,
O child, O corpse, the live dead face of thee,
Whose life and death are one thing upon earth
Where day kills night and night again kills day
And dies ; but where is that Harmonia ?

O all-beholden light not seen of me,
Air, and warm winds that under the sun's eye
Stretch your strong wings at morning ; and thou, sky,
Whose hollow circle engirdling earth and sea
All night the set stars limit, and all day
The moving sun remeasures ; ye, I say,

Ye heights of hills, and thou Dircean spring
Inviolable, and ye towers that saw cast down
Seven kings keen-sighted toward your seven-faced town
And quenched the red seed of one sightless king ;
And thou, for death less dreadful than for birth,
Whose wild leaves hide the horror of the earth,

O mountain whereon gods made chase of kings,
Cithæron, thou that sawest on Pentheus dead
Fangs of a mother fasten and wax red
And satiate with a son thy swollen springs,
And heardst her cry fright all thine eyries' nests
Who gave death suck at sanguine-suckling breasts ;

Yea, and a grief more grievous, without name,
A curse too grievous for the name of grief,
Thou sawest, and heardst the rumour scare belief
Even unto death and madness, when the flame
Was lit whose ashes dropped about the pyre
That of two brethren made one sundering fire ;

O bitter nurse, that on thine hard bare knees
Rear'dst for his fate the bloody-footed child
Whose hands should be more bloodily defiled
And the old blind feet walk wearier ways than these,
Whose seed, brought forth in darkness unto doom,
Should break as fire out of his mother's womb ;

I bear you witness as ye bear to me,
Time, day, night, sun, stars, life, death, air, sea, earth,
And ye that round the human house of birth
Watch with veiled heads and weaponed hands, and see
Good things and evil, strengthless yet and dumb,
Sit in the clouds with cloudlike hours to come ;

Ye forces without form and viewless powers
That have the keys of all our years in hold,
That prophesy too late with tongues of gold,
In a strange speech whose words are perished hours,

I witness to you what good things ye give
As ye to me what evil while I live.

What should I do to blame you, what to praise,
For floral hours and hours funereal?
What should I do to curse or bless at all
For winter-woven or summer-coloured days?
Curse he that will and bless you whoso can,
I have no common part in you with man.

I hear a springing water, whose quick sound
Makes softer the soft sunless patient air,
And the wind's hand is laid on my thin hair
Light as a lover's, and the grasses round
Have odours in them of green bloom and rain
Sweet as the kiss wherewith sleep kisses pain.

I hear the low sound of the spring of time
Still beating as the low live throb of blood,
And where its waters gather head and flood
I hear change moving on them, and the chime
Across them of reverberate wings of hours
Sounding, and feel the future air of flowers.

The wind of change is soft as snow, and sweet
The sense thereof as roses in the sun,
The faint wind springing with the springs that run,
The dim sweet smell of flowering hopes, and heat
Of unbeholden sunrise; yet how long
I know not, till the morning put forth song.

I prophesy of life, who live with death;
Of joy, being sad; of sunlight, who am blind;
Of man, whose ways are alien from mankind
And his lips are not parted with man's breath;

I am a word out of the speechless years,
The tongue of time, that no man sleeps who hears.

I stand a shadow across the door of doom,
Athwart the lintel of death's house, and wait;
Nor quick nor dead, nor flexible by fate,
Nor quite of earth nor wholly of the tomb;
A voice, a vision, light as fire or air,
Driven between days that shall be and that were.

I prophesy, with feet upon a grave,
Of death cast out and life devouring death
As flame doth wood and stubble with a breath;
Of freedom, though all manhood were one slave;
Of truth, though all the world were liar; of love,
That time nor hate can raze the witness of.

Life that was given for love's sake and his law's
Their powers have no more power on; they divide
Spoils wrung from lust or wrath of man or pride,
And keen oblivion without pity or pause
Sets them on fire and scatters them on air
Like ashes shaken from a suppliant's hair.

But life they lay no hand on; life once given
No force of theirs hath competence to take;
Life that was given for some divine thing's sake,
To mix the bitterness of earth with heaven,
Light with man's night, and music with his breath,
Dies not, but makes its living food of death.

I have seen this, who live where men are not,
In the high starless air of fruitful night
On that serenest and obscurest height
Where dead and unborn things are one in thought

And whence the live unconquerable springs
Feed full of force the torrents of new things.

I have seen this, who saw long since, being man,
As now I know not if indeed I be,
The fair bare body of Wisdom, good to see
And evil, whence my light and night began ;
Light on the goal and darkness on the way,
Light all through night and darkness all through day.

Mother, that by that Pegasean spring
Didst fold round in thine arms thy blinded son,
Weeping "O holiest, what thing hast thou done,
What, to my child ? woe's me that see the thing !
Is this thy love to me-ward, and hereof
Must I take sample how the gods can love ?

"O child, thou hast seen indeed, poor child of mine,
The breasts and flanks of Pallas bare in sight,
But never shalt see more the dear sun's light ;
O Helicon, how great a pay is thine
For some poor antelopes and wild-deer dead,
My child's eyes hast thou taken in their stead—"

Mother, thou knewest not what she had to give,
Thy goddess, though then angered, for mine eyes ;
Fame and foreknowledge, and to be most wise,
And centuries of high-thoughted life to live,
And in mine hand this guiding staff to be
As eyesight to the feet of men that see.

Perchance I shall not die at all, nor pass
The general door and lintel of men dead ;
Yet even the very tongue of wisdom said
What grace should come with death to Tiresias,
What special honour that God's hand accord
Who gathers all men's nations as their lord.

And sometimes when the secret eye of thought
Is changed with obscuration, and the sense
Aches with long pain of hollow prescience,
And fiery foresight with foresuffering bought
Seems even to infect my spirit and consume,
Hunger and thirst come on me for the tomb.

I could be fain to drink my death and sleep,
And no more wrapped about with bitter dreams
Talk with the stars and with the winds and streams
And with the inevitable years, and weep ;
For how should he who communes with the years
Be sometime not a living spring of tears ?

O child, that guided of thine only will
Didst set thy maiden foot against the gate
To strike it open ere thine hour of fate,
Antigone, men say not thou didst ill,
For love's sake and the reverence of his awe
Divinely dying, slain by mortal law ;

For love is awful as immortal death.
And through thee surely hath thy brother won
Rest, out of sight of our world-weary sun,
And in the dead land where ye ghosts draw breath
A royal place and honour ; so wast thou
Happy, though earth have hold of thee too now.

So hast thou life and name inviolable
And joy it may be, sacred and severe,
Joy secret-souled beyond all hope or fear,
A monumental joy wherein to dwell
Secluse and silent, a selected state,
Serene possession of thy proper fate.

Thou art not dead as these are dead who live
Full of blind years, a sorrow-shaken kind,
Nor as these are am I the prophet blind;
They have not life that have not heart to give
Life, nor have eyesight who lack heart to see
When to be not is better than to be.

O ye whom time but bears with for a span,
How long will ye be blind and dead, how long
Make your own souls part of your own soul's wrong?
Son of the word of the most high gods, man,
Why wilt thou make thine hour of light and breath
Emptier of all but shame than very death?

Fool, wilt thou live for ever? though thou care
With all thine heart for life to keep it fast,
Shall not thine hand forego it at the last?
Lo, thy sure hour shall take thee by the hair
Sleeping, or when thou knowest not, or wouldst fly;
And as men died much mightier shalt thou die.

Yea, they are dead, men much more worth than thou;
The savour of heroic lives that were,
Is it not mixed into thy common air?
The sense of them is shed about thee now:
Feel not thy brows a wind blowing from far?
Aches not thy forehead with a future star?

The light that thou may'st make out of thy name
Is in the wind of this same hour that drives,
Blown within reach but once of all men's lives;
And he that puts forth hand upon the flame
Shall have it for a garland on his head
To sign him for a king among the dead.

But these men that the lessening years behold,
Who sit the most part without flame or crown,
And brawl and sleep and wear their life-days down
With joys and griefs ignobler than of old,
And care not if the better day shall be—
Are these or art thou dead, Antigone?

PART II

As when one wakes out of a waning dream
And sees with instant eyes the naked thought
Whereof the vision as a web was wrought,
I saw beneath a heaven of cloud and gleam,
Ere yet the heart of the young sun waxed brave,
One like a prophet standing by a grave.

In the hoar heaven was hardly beam or breath,
And all the coloured hills and fields were grey,
And the wind wandered seeking for the day,
And wailed as though he had found her done to death
And this grey hour had built to bury her
The hollow twilight for a sepulchre.

But in my soul I saw as in a glass
A pale and living body full of grace
There lying, and over it the prophet's face
Fixed; and the face was not of Tiresias,

For such a starry fire was in his eyes
As though their light it was that made the skies.

Such eyes should God's have been when very love
Looked forth of them and set the sun aflame,
And such his lips that called the light by name
And bade the morning forth at sound thereof;
His face was sad and masterful as fate,
And like a star's his look compassionate.

Like a star's gazed on of sad eyes so long
It seems to yearn with pity, and all its fire
As a man's heart to tremble with desire
And heave as though the light would bring forth song;
Yet from his face flashed lightning on the land,
And like the thunder-bearer's was his hand.

The steepness of strange stairs had tired his feet,
And his lips yet seemed sick of that salt bread
Wherewith the lips of banishment are fed;
But nothing was there in the world so sweet
As the most bitter love, like God's own grace,
Wherewith he gazed on that fair buried face.

Grief and glad pride and passion and sharp shame,
Wrath and remembrance, faith and hope and hate
And pitiless pity of days degenerate,
Were in his eyes as an incorporate flame
That burned about her, and the heart thereof
And central flower was very fire of love.

But all about her grave wherein she slept
Were noises of the wild wind-footed years
Whose footprints flying were full of blood and tears,
Shrieks as of Mænads on their hills that leapt

And yelled as beasts of ravin, and their meat
Was the rent flesh of their own sons to eat:

And fiery shadows passing with strange cries,
And Sphinx-like shapes about the ruined lands,
And the red reek of parricidal hands
And intermixture of incestuous eyes,
And light as of that self-divided flame
Which made an end of the Cadmean name.

And I beheld again, and lo the grave,
And the bright body laid therein as dead,
And the same shadow across another head
That bowed down silent on that sleeping slave
Who was the lady of empire from her birth
And light of all the kingdoms of the earth.

Within the compass of the watcher's hand
All strengths of other men and divers powers
Were held at ease and gathered up as flowers;
His heart was as the heart of his whole land,
And at his feet as natural servants lay
Twilight and dawn and night and labouring day.

He was most awful of the sons of God.
Even now men seeing seemed at his lips to see
The trumpet of the judgment that should be,
And in his right hand terror for a rod,
And in the breath that made the mountains bow
The horned fire of Moses on his brow.

The strong wind of the coming of the Lord
Had blown as flame upon him, and brought down
On his bare head from heaven fire for a crown,
And fire was girt upon him as a sword

To smite and lighten, and on what ways he trod
There fell from him the shadow of a God.

Pale, with the whole world's judgment in his eyes,
He stood and saw the grief and shame endure
That he, though highest of angels, might not cure,
And the same sins done under the same skies,
And the same slaves to the same tyrants thrown,
And fain he would have slept, and fain been stone.

But with unslumbering eyes he watched the sleep
That sealed her sense whose eyes were suns of old;
And the night shut and opened, and behold,
The same grave where those prophets came to weep,
But she that lay therein had moved and stirred,
And where those twain had watched her stood a third.

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The tripled rhyme that closed in Paradise
With Love's name sealing up its starry speech—
The tripled might of hand that found in reach
All crowns beheld far off of all men's eyes,
Song, colour, carven wonders of live stone—
These were not, but the very soul alone.

The living spirit, the good gift of grace,
The faith which takes of its own blood to give
That the dead veins of buried hope may live,
Came on her sleeping, face to naked face,
And from a soul more sweet than all the south
Breathed love upon her sealed and breathless mouth.

Between her lips the breath was blown as fire,
And through her flushed veins leapt the liquid life,
And with sore passion and ambiguous strife
The new birth rent her and the new desire,
The will to live, the competence to be,
The sense to hearken and the soul to see.

And the third prophet standing by her grave
Stretched forth his hand and touched her, and her eyes
Opened as sudden suns in heaven might rise,
And her soul caught from his the faith to save ;
Faith above creeds, faith beyond records, born
Of the pure, naked, fruitful, awful morn.

For in the daybreak now that night was dead
The light, the shadow, the delight, the pain,
The purpose and the passion of those twain,
Seemed gathered on that third prophetic head,
And all their crowns were as one crown, and one
His face with her face in the living sun.

For even with that communion of their eyes
His whole soul passed into her and made her strong ;
And all the sounds and shows of shame and wrong,
The hand that slays, the lip that mocks and lies,
Temples and thrones that yet men seem to see—
Are these dead or art thou dead, Italy ?

THE SONG OF THE STANDARD

Maiden most beautiful, mother most bountiful, lady
of lands,
Queen and republican, crowned of the centuries whose
years are thy sands,
See for thy sake what we bring to thee, Italy, here
in our hands.

This is the banner thy gonfalon, fair in the front of
thy fight,
Red from the hearts that were pierced for thee, white
as thy mountains are white,
Green as the spring of thy soul everlasting, whose
life-blood is light.

Take to thy bosom thy banner, a fair bird fit for the
nest,
Feathered for flight into sunrise or sunset, for east-
ward or west,
Fledged for the flight everlasting, but held yet warm
to thy breast.

Gather it close to thee, song-bird or storm-bearer,
eagle or dove,
Lift it to sunward, a beacon beneath to the beacon
above,
Green as our hope in it, white as our faith in it, red
as our love.

Thunder and splendour of lightning are hid in the folds of it furled ;
Who shall unroll it but thou, as thy bolt to be handled and hurled,
Out of whose lips is the honey, whose bosom the milk of the world ?

Out of thine hands hast thou fed us with pasture of colour and song ;
Glory and beauty by birthright to thee as thy garments belong ;
Out of thine hands thou shalt give us as surely deliverance from wrong.

Out of thine eyes thou hast shed on us love as a lamp in our night,
Wisdom a lodestar to ships, and remembrance a flame-coloured light ;
Out of thine eyes thou shalt shew us as surely the sundawn of right.

Turn to us, speak to us, Italy, mother, but once and a word,
None shall not follow thee, none shall not serve thee, not one that has heard ;
Twice hast thou spoken a message, and time is athirst for the third.

Kingdom and empire of peoples thou hadst, and thy lordship made one
North sea and south sea and east men and west men that look on the sun ;
Spirit was in thee and counsel, when soul in the nations was none.

Banner and beacon thou wast to the centuries of
storm-wind and foam,
Ages that clashed in the dark with each other, and
years without home ;
Empress and prophetess wast thou, and what wilt
thou now be, O Rome ?

Ah, by the faith and the hope and the love that have
need of thee now,
Shines not thy face with the forethought of freedom,
and burns not thy brow ?
Who is against her but all men ? and who is beside
her but thou ?

Art thou not better than all men ? and where shall
she turn but to thee ?
Lo, not a breath, not a beam, not a beacon from
midland to sea ;
Freedom cries out for a sign among nations, and
none will be free.

England in doubt of her, France in despair of her,
all without heart—
Stand on her side in the vanward of ages, and strike
on her part !
Strike but one stroke for the love of her love of thee,
sweet that thou art !

Take in thy right hand thy banner, a strong staff
fit for thine hand ;
Forth at the light of it lifted shall foul things flock
from the land ;
Faster than stars from the sun shall they fly, being
lighter than sand.

Green thing to green in the summer makes answer,
and rose-tree to rose ;
Lily by lily the year becomes perfect ; and none of
us knows
What thing is fairest of all things on earth as it
brightens and blows.

This thing is fairest in all time of all things, in all
time is best—
Freedom, that made thee, our mother, and suckled
her sons at thy breast ;
Take to thy bosom the nations, and there shall the
world come to rest.

ON THE DOWNS

A FAINT sea without wind or sun ;
A sky like flameless vapour dun ;
  A valley like an unsealed grave
That no man cares to weep upon,
  Bare, without boon to crave,
    Or flower to save.

And on the lip's edge of the down,
Here where the bent-grass burns to brown
  In the dry sea-wind, and the heath
Crawls to the cliff-side and looks down,
  I watch, and hear beneath
    The low tide breathe.

Along the long lines of the cliff,
Down the flat sea-line without skiff
  Or sail or back-blown fume for mark,
Through wind-worn heads of heath and stiff
  Stems blossomless and stark
    With dry sprays dark,

I send mine eyes out as for news
Of comfort that all these refuse,
  Tidings of light or living air
From windward where the low clouds muse
  And the sea blind and bare
    Seems full of care.

So is it now as it was then,
And as men have been such are men.
  There as I stood I seem to stand,
Here sitting chambered, and again
  Feel spread on either hand
    Sky, sea, and land.

As a queen taken and stripped and bound
Sat earth, discoloured and discrowned;
  As a king's palace empty and dead
The sky was, without light or sound;
  And on the summer's head
    Were ashes shed.

Scarce wind enough was on the sea,
Scarce hope enough there moved in me,
  To sow with live blown flowers of white
The green plain's sad serenity,
  Or with stray thoughts of light
    Touch my soul's sight.

By footless ways and sterile went
My thought unsatisfied, and bent
  With blank unspeculative eyes
On the untracked sands of discontent
  Where, watched of helpless skies,
    Life hopeless lies.

East and west went my soul to find
Light, and the world was bare and blind
  And the soil herbless where she trod
And saw men laughing scourge mankind,
  Unsmitten by the rod
    Of any God.

Out of time's blind old eyes were shed
Tears that were mortal, and left dead
  The heart and spirit of the years,
And on man's fallen and helmless head
  Time's disanointing tears
    Fell cold as fears.

Hope flowering had but strength to bear
The fruitless fruitage of despair;
  Grief trod the grapes of joy for wine,
Whereof love drinking unaware
  Died as one undivine
    And made no sign.

And soul and body dwelt apart;
And weary wisdom without heart
  Stared on the dead round heaven and sighed,
"Is death too hollow as thou art,
  Or as man's living pride?"
    And saying so died.

And my soul heard the songs and groans
That are about and under thrones,
  And felt through all time's murmur thrill
Fate's old imperious semitones
  That made of good and ill
    One same tune still.

Then "Where is God? and where is aid?
Or what good end of these?" she said;
  "Is there no God or end at all,
Nor reason with unreason weighed,
  Nor force to disenthral
    Weak feet that fall?

"No light to lighten and no rod
To chasten men? Is there no God?"
So girt with anguish, iron-zoned,
Went my soul weeping as she trod
Between the men enthroned
And men that groaned.

O fool, that for brute cries of wrong
Heard not the grey glad mother's song
Ring response from the hills and waves,
But heard harsh noises all day long
Of spirits that were slaves
And dwelt in graves.

The wise word of the secret earth
Who knows what life and death are worth,
And how no help and no control
Can speed or stay things come to birth,
Nor all worlds' wheels that roll
Crush one born soul.

With all her tongues of life and death,
With all her bloom and blood and breath,
From all years dead and all things done,
In the ear of man the mother saith,
"There is no God, O son,
If thou be none."

So my soul sick with watching heard
That day the wonder of that word,
And as one springs out of a dream
Sprang, and the stagnant wells were stirred
Whence flows through gloom and gleam
Thought's soundless stream.

Out of pale cliff and sunburnt heath,
Out of the low sea curled beneath
  In the land's bending arm embayed,
Out of all lives that thought hears breathe
  Life within life inlaid,
    Was answer made.

A multitudinous monotone
Of dust and flower and seed and stone,
  In the deep sea-rock's mid-sea sloth,
In the live water's trembling zone,
  In all men love and loathe,
    One God at growth.

One forceful nature uncreate
That feeds itself with death and fate,
  Evil and good, and change and time,
That within all men lies at wait
  Till the hour shall bid them climb
    And live sublime.

For all things come by fate to flower
At their unconquerable hour,
  And time brings truth, and truth makes free,
And freedom fills time's veins with power,
  As, brooding on that sea,
    My thought filled me.

And the sun smote the clouds and slew,
And from the sun the sea's breath blew,
  And white waves laughed and turned and fled
The long green heaving sea-field through,
  And on them overhead
    The sky burnt red.

Like a furled flag that wind sets free,
On the swift summer-coloured sea
  Shook out the red lines of the light,
The live sun's standard, blown to lee
  Across the live sea's white
    And green delight.

And with divine triumphant awe
My spirit moved within me saw,
  With burning passion of stretched eyes,
Clear as the light's own firstborn law,
  In windless wastes of skies
    Time's deep dawn rise.

MESSIDOR

Put in the sickles and reap ;
For the morning of harvest is red,
And the long large ranks of the corn
Coloured and clothed as the morn
Stand thick in the fields and deep
For them that faint to be fed.
Let all that hunger and weep
Come hither, and who would have bread
Put in the sickles and reap.

Coloured and clothed as the morn,
The grain grows ruddier than gold,
And the good strong sun is alight
In the mists of the day-dawn white,
And the crescent, a faint sharp horn,
In the fear of his face turns cold
As the snakes of the night-time that creep
From the flag of our faith unrolled.
Put in the sickles and reap.

In the mists of the day-dawn white
That roll round the morning star,
The large flame lightens and grows
Till the red-gold harvest-rows,
Full-grown, are full of the light

As the spirits of strong men are,
Crying, Who shall slumber or sleep?
Who put back morning or mar?
Put in the sickles and reap.

Till the red-gold harvest-rows
For miles through shudder and shine
In the wind's breath, fed with the sun,
A thousand spear-heads as one
Bowed as for battle to close
Line in rank against line
With place and station to keep
Till all men's hands at a sign
Put in the sickles and reap.

A thousand spear-heads as one
Wave as with swing of the sea
When the mid tide sways at its height;
For the hour is for harvest or fight
In face of the just calm sun,
As the signal in season may be
And the lot in the helm may leap
When chance shall shake it; but ye,
Put in the sickles and reap.

For the hour is for harvest or fight
To clothe with raiment of red;
O men sore stricken of hours,
Lo, this one, is not it ours
To glean, to gather, to smite?
Let none make risk of his head
Within reach of the clean scythe-sweep,
When the people that lay as the dead
Put in the sickles and reap.

Lo, this one, is not it ours,
  Now the ruins of dead things rattle
    As dead men's bones in the pit,
    Now the kings wax lean as they sit
Girt round with memories of powers,
  With musters counted as cattle
And armies folded as sheep
  Till the red blind husbandman battle
Put in the sickles and reap?

Now the kings wax lean as they sit,
  The people grow strong to stand;
    The men they trod on and spat,
    The dumb dread people that sat
As corpses cast in a pit,
  Rise up with God at their hand,
And thrones are hurled on a heap,
  And strong men, sons of the land,
Put in the sickles and reap.

The dumb dread people that sat
  All night without screen for the night,
    All day without food for the day,
    They shall give not their harvest away,
They shall eat of its fruit and wax fat:
  They shall see the desire of their sight,
Though the ways of the seasons be steep,
  They shall climb with face to the light,
Put in the sickles and reap.

ODE ON THE INSURRECTION IN CANDIA

Str. 1

I laid my laurel-leaf
At the white feet of grief,
Seeing how with covered face and plumeless wings,
With unreverted head
Veiled, as who mourns his dead,
Lay Freedom couched between the thrones of kings,
A wearied lion without lair,
And bleeding from base wounds, and vexed with alien air.

Str. 2

Who was it, who, put poison to thy mouth,
Who lulled with craft or chant thy vigilant eyes,
O light of all men, lamp to north and south,
Eastward and westward, under all men's skies?
For if thou sleep, we perish, and thy name
Dies with the dying of our ephemeral breath;
And if the dust of death o'ergrows thy flame,
Heaven also is darkened with the dust of death.
If thou be mortal, if thou change or cease,
If thine hand fail, or thine eyes turn from Greece,
Thy firstborn, and the firstfruits of thy fame,
God is no God, and man is moulded out of shame.

STR. 3

Is there change in the secret skies,
In the sacred places that see
The divine beginning of things,
The weft of the web of the world?
Is Freedom a worm that dies,
And God no God of the free?
Is heaven like as earth with her kings
And time as a serpent curled
Round life as a tree?

From the steel-bound snows of the north,
From the mystic mother, the east,
From the sands of the fiery south,
From the low-lit clouds of the west,
A sound of a cry is gone forth;
Arise, stand up from the feast,
Let wine be far from the mouth,
Let no man sleep or take rest,
Till the plague hath ceased.

Let none rejoice or make mirth
Till the evil thing be stayed,
Nor grief be lulled in the lute,
Nor hope be loud on the lyre;
Let none be glad upon earth.
O music of young man and maid,
O songs of the bride, be mute.
For the light of her eyes, her desire,
Is the soul dismayed.

It is not a land new-born
That is scourged of a stranger's hand,
That is rent and consumed with flame.
We have known it of old, this face,
With the cheeks and the tresses torn,
With shame on the brow as a brand.
We have named it of old by name,
The land of the royallest race,
The most holy land.

STR. 4

Had I words of fire,
Whose words are weak as snow;
Were my heart a lyre
Whence all its love might flow
In the mighty modulations of desire,
In the notes wherewith man's passion worships woe;

Could my song release
The thought weak words confine,
And my grief, O Greece,
Prove how it worships thine;
It would move with pulse of war the limbs of peace
Till she flushed and trembled and became divine.

(Once she held for true
This truth of sacred strain;
Though blood drip like dew
And life run down like rain,
It is better that war spare but one or two
Than that many live, and liberty be slain.)

Then with fierce increase
And bitter mother's mirth,
From the womb of peace,
A womb that yearns for birth,
As a man-child should deliverance come to Greece,
As a saviour should the child be born on earth.

STR. 5

O that these my days had been
Ere white peace and shame were wed
Without torch or dancers' din
Round the unsacred marriage-bed!
For of old the sweet-tongued law,
Freedom, clothed with all men's love,
Girt about with all men's awe,
With the wild war-eagle mated
The white breast of peace the dove,
And his ravenous heart abated
And his windy wings were furled
In an eyrie consecrated
Where the snakes of strife uncurled,
And her soul was soothed and sated
With the welfare of the world.

ANT. 1

But now, close-clad with peace,
While war lays hand on Greece,
The kingdoms and their kings stand by to see;
"Aha, we are strong," they say,
"We are sure, we are well," even they;
"And if we serve, what ails ye to be free?

We are warm, clothed round with peace and shame ;
But ye lie dead and naked, dying for a name."

ANT. 2

O kings and queens and nations miserable,
O fools and blind, and full of sins and fears,
With these it is, with you it is not well ;
Ye have one hour, but these the immortal years.
These for a pang, a breath, a pulse of pain,
Have honour, while that honour on earth shall be :
Ye for a little sleep and sloth shall gain
Scorn, while one man of all men born is free.
Even as the depth more deep than night or day,
The sovereign heaven that keeps its eldest way,
So without chance or change, so without stain,
The heaven of their high memories shall nor wax nor wane.

ANT. 3

As the soul on the lips of the dead
Stands poising her wings for flight,
A bird scarce quit of her prison,
But fair without form or flesh,
So stands over each man's head
A splendour of imminent light,
A glory of fame rearisen,
Of day rearisen afresh
From the hells of night.

In the hundred cities of Crete
Such glory was not of old,
Though her name was great upon earth
And her face was fair on the sea.

The words of her lips were sweet,
Her days were woven with gold,
Her fruits came timely to birth ;
So fair she was, being free,
Who is bought and sold.

So fair, who is fairer now
With her children dead at her side,
Unsceptred, unconsecrated,
Unapparelled, unhelped, unpitied,
With blood for gold on her brow,
Where the towery tresses divide ;
The goodly, the golden-gated,
Many-crowned, many-named, many-citied.
Made like as a bride.

And these are the bridegroom's gifts ;
Anguish that straitens the breath,
Shame, and the weeping of mothers,
And the suckling dead at the breast,
White breast that a long sob lifts ;
And the dumb dead mouth, which saith,
"How long, and how long, my brothers ?"
And wrath which endures not rest,
And the pains of death.

ANT. 4

Ah, but would that men,
With eyelids purged by tears,
Saw, and heard again
With consecrated ears,
All the clamour, all the splendour, all the slain,
All the lights and sounds of war, the fates and fears ;

Saw far off aspire,
With crash of mine and gate,
From a single pyre
The myriad flames of fate,
Soul by soul transfigured in funereal fire,
Hate made weak by love, and love made strong by hate.

Children without speech,
And many a nursing breast;
Old men in the breach,
Where death sat down a guest;
With triumphant lamentation made for each,
Let the world salute their ruin and their rest.

In one iron hour
The crescent flared and waned,
As from tower to tower,
Fire-scathed and sanguine-stained,
Death, with flame in hand, an open bloodred flower,
Passed, and where it bloomed no bloom of life remained.

ANT. 5

Hear, thou earth, the heavy-hearted
Weary nurse of waning races;
From the dust of years departed,
From obscure funereal places,
Raise again thy sacred head,
Lift the light up of thine eyes;
Where are they of all thy dead
That did more than these men dying
In their godlike Grecian wise?

Not with garments rent and sighing,
Neither gifts of myrrh and gold,
Shall their sons lament them lying,
Lest the fame of them wax cold ;
But with lives to lives replying,
And a worship from of old.

EPODE

O sombre heart of earth and swoln with grief,
That in thy time wast as a bird for mirth,
Dim womb of life and many a seed and sheaf,
And full of changes, ancient heart of earth,
From grain and flower, from grass and every leaf,
Thy mysteries and thy multitudes of birth,
From hollow and hill, from vales and all thy springs,
From all shapes born and breath of all lips made,
From thunders, and the sound of winds and wings,
From light, and from the solemn sleep of shade,
From the full fountains of all living things,
Speak, that this plague be stayed.
Bear witness all the ways of death and life
If thou be with us in the world's old strife,
If thou be mother indeed,
And from these wounds that bleed
Gather in thy great breast the dews that fall,
And on thy sacred knees
Lull with mute melodies,
Mother, thy sleeping sons in death's dim hall.
For these thy sons, behold,
Sons of thy sons of old,
Bear witness if these be not as they were ;
If that high name of Greece
Depart, dissolve, decease
From mouths of men and memories like as air.

By the last milk that drips
Dead on the child's dead lips,
By old men's white unviolated hair,
By sweet unburied faces
That fill those red high places
Where death and freedom found one lion's lair,
By all the bloodred tears
That fill the chaliced years,
The vessels of the sacrament of time,
Wherewith, O thou most holy,
O Freedom, sure and slowly
Thy ministrant white hands cleanse earth of crime;
Though we stand off afar
Where slaves and slaveries are,
Among the chains and crowns of poisonous peace;
Though not the beams that shone
From rent Arcadion
Can melt her mists and bid her snows decrease;
Do thou with sudden wings
Darken the face of kings,
But turn again the beauty of thy brows on Greece;
Thy white and woundless brows,
Whereto her great heart bows;
Give her the glories of thine eyes to see;
Turn thee, O holiest head,
Toward all thy quick and dead,
For love's sake of the souls that cry for thee;
O love, O light, O flame,
By thine own Grecian name,
We call thee and we charge thee that all these be free

Jan. 1867.

"NON DOLET"

It does not hurt. She looked along the knife
Smiling, and watched the thick drops mix and run
Down the sheer blade; not that which had been done
Could hurt the sweet sense of the Roman wife,
But that which was to do yet ere the strife
Could end for each for ever, and the sun:
Nor was the palm yet nor was peace yet won
While pain had power upon her husband's life.

It does not hurt, Italia. Thou art more
Than bride to bridegroom; how shalt thou not take
The gift love's blood has reddened for thy sake?
Was not thy lifeblood given for us before?
And if love's heartblood can avail thy need,
And thou not die, how should it hurt indeed?

EURYDICE

TO VICTOR HUGO

Orpheus, the night is full of tears and cries,
And hardly for the storm and ruin shed
Can even thine eyes be certain of her head
Who never passed out of thy spirit's eyes,
But stood and shone before them in such wise
As when with love her lips and hands were fed,
And with mute mouth out of the dusty dead
Strove to make answer when thou bad'st her rise.

Yet viper-stricken must her lifeblood feel
The fang that stung her sleeping, the foul germ
Even when she wakes of hell's most poisonous worm,
Though now it writhe beneath her wounded heel.
Turn yet, she will not fade nor fly from thee;
Wait, and see hell yield up Eurydice.

AN APPEAL

I

Art thou indeed among these,
Thou of the tyrannous crew,
The kingdoms fed upon blood,
O queen from of old of the seas,
England, art thou of them too
That drink of the poisonous flood,
That hide under poisonous trees?

II

Nay, thy name from of old,
Mother, was pure, or we dreamed
Purer we held thee than this,
Purer fain would we hold;
So goodly a glory it seemed,
A fame so bounteous of bliss,
So more precious than gold.

III

A praise so sweet in our ears,
That thou in the tempest of things
As a rock for a refuge shouldst stand,
In the bloodred river of tears
Poured forth for the triumph of kings;
A safeguard, a sheltering land,
In the thunder and torrent of years.

IV

Strangers came gladly to thee,
Exiles, chosen of men,
Safe for thy sake in thy shade,
Sat down at thy feet and were free.
So men spake of thee then;
Now shall their speaking be stayed?
Ah, so let it not be!

V

Not for revenge or affright,
Pride, or a tyrannous lust,
Cast from thee the crown of thy praise.
Mercy was thine in thy might;
Strong when thou wert, thou wert just;
Now, in the wrong-doing days,
Cleave thou, thou at least, to the right.

VI

How should one charge thee, how sway,
Save by the memories that were?
Not thy gold nor the strength of thy ships,
Nor the might of thine armies at bay,
Made thee, mother, most fair;
But a word from republican lips
Said in thy name in thy day.

VII

Hast thou said it, and hast thou forgot?
Is thy praise in thine ears as a scoff?
Blood of men guiltless was shed,
Children, and souls without spot,

Shed, but in places far off ;
Let slaughter no more be, said
Milton ; and slaughter was not.

VIII

Was it not said of thee too,
Now, but now, by thy foes,
By the slaves that had slain their France,
And thee would slay as they slew—
" Down with her walls that enclose
Freemen that eye us askance,
Fugitives, men that are true ! "

IX

This was thy praise or thy blame
From bondsman or freeman—to be
Pure from pollution of slaves,
Clean of their sins, and thy name
Bloodless, innocent, free ;
Now if thou be not, thy waves
Wash not from off thee thy shame.

X

Freeman he is not, but slave,
Whoso in fear for the State
Cries for surety of blood,
Help of gibbet and grave ;
Neither is any land great
Whom, in her fear-stricken mood,
These things only can save.

XI

Lo, how fair from afar,
Taintless of tyranny, stands
Thy mighty daughter, for years
Who trod the winepress of war ;
Shines with immaculate hands ;
Slays not a foe, neither fears ;
Stains not peace with a scar.

XII

Be not as tyrant or slave,
England ; be not as these,
Thou that wert other than they.
Stretch out thine hand, but to save ;
Put forth thy strength, and release ;
Lest there arise, if thou slay,
Thy shame as a ghost from the grave.

November 20, 1867.

PERINDE AC CADAVER

In a vision Liberty stood
By the childless charm-stricken bed
Where, barren of glory and good,
Knowing nought if she would not or would,
England slept with her dead.

Her face that the foam had whitened,
Her hands that were strong to strive,
Her eyes whence battle had lightened,
Over all was a drawn shroud tightened
To bind her asleep and alive.

She turned and laughed in her dream
With grey lips arid and cold;
She saw not the face as a beam
Burn on her, but only a gleam
Through her sleep as of new-stamped gold.

But the goddess, with terrible tears
In the light of her down-drawn eyes,
Spake fire in the dull sealed ears;
"Thou, sick with slumbers and fears,
Wilt thou sleep now indeed or arise?

"With dreams and with words and with light
Memories and empty desires
Thou hast wrapped thyself round all night;
Thou hast shut up thine heart from the right,
And warmed thee at burnt-out fires.

"Yet once if I smote at thy gate,
Thy sons would sleep not, but heard;
O thou that wast found so great,
Art thou smitten with folly or fate
That thy sons have forgotten my word?

"O Cromwell's mother, O breast
That suckled Milton! thy name
That was beautiful then, that was blest,
Is it wholly discrowned and deprest,
Trodden under by sloth into shame?

"Why wilt thou hate me and die?
For none can hate me and live.
What ill have I done to thee? why
Wilt thou turn from me fighting, and fly,
Who would follow thy feet and forgive?

"Thou hast seen me stricken, and said,
What is it to me? I am strong:
Thou hast seen me bowed down on my dead
And laughed and lifted thine head,
And washed thine hands of my wrong.

"Thou hast put out the soul of thy sight;
Thou hast sought to my foemen as friend,
To my traitors that kiss me and smite,
To the kingdoms and empires of night
That begin with the darkness, and end.

"Turn thee, awaken, arise,
With the light that is risen on the lands,
With the change of the fresh-coloured skies;
Set thine eyes on mine eyes,
Lay thy hands in my hands."

She moved and mourned as she heard,
Sighed and shifted her place,
As the wells of her slumber were stirred
By the music and wind of the word,
Then turned and covered her face.

"Ah," she said in her sleep,
"Is my work not done with and done?
Is there corn for my sickle to reap?
And strange is the pathway, and steep,
And sharp overhead is the sun.

"I have done thee service enough,
Loved thee enough in my day;
Now nor hatred nor love
Nor hardly remembrance thereof
Lives in me to lighten my way.

"And is it not well with us here?
Is change as good as is rest?
What hope should move me, or fear,
That eye should open or ear,
Who have long since won what is best?

"Where among us are such things
As turn men's hearts into hell?
Have we not queens without stings,
Scotched princes, and fangless kings?
Yea," she said, "we are well.

"We have filed the teeth of the snake
Monarchy, how should it bite?
Should the slippery slow thing wake,
It will not sting for my sake;
Yea," she said, "I do right."

So spake she, drunken with dreams,
Mad; but again in her ears
A voice as of storm-swelled streams
Spake; "No brave shame then redeems
Thy lusts of sloth and thy fears?

"Thy poor lie slain of thine hands,
Their starved limbs rot in thy sight;
As a shadow the ghost of thee stands
Among men living and lands,
And stirs not leftward or right.

"Freeman he is not, but slave,
Who stands not out on my side;
His own hand hollows his grave,
Nor strength is in me to save
Where strength is none to abide.

"Time shall tread on his name
That was written for honour of old,
Who hath taken in change for fame
Dust, and silver, and shame,
Ashes, and iron, and gold."

MONOTONES

Because there is but one truth ;
  Because there is but one banner ;
    Because there is but one light ;
Because we have with us our youth
  Once, and one chance and one manner
    Of service, and then the night ;

Because we have found not yet
  Any way for the world to follow
    Save only that ancient way ;
Whosoever forsake or forget,
  Whose faith soever be hollow,
    Whose hope soever grow grey ;

Because of the watchwords of kings
  That are many and strange and unwritten,
    Diverse, and our watchword is one ;
Therefore, though seven be the strings,
  One string, if the harp be smitten,
    Sole sounds, till the tune be done ;

Sounds without cadence or change
  In a weary monotonous burden,
    Be the keynote of mourning or mirth ;
Free, but free not to range ;
  Taking for crown and for guerdon
    No man's praise upon earth ;

Saying one sole word evermore,
In the ears of the charmed world saying,
Charmed by spells to its death ;
One that chanted of yore
To a tune of the sword-sweep's playing
In the lips of the dead blew breath ;

Therefore I set not mine hand
To the shifting of changed modulations,
To the smiting of manifold strings ;
While the thrones of the throned men stand,
One song for the morning of nations,
One for the twilight of kings.

One chord, one word, and one way,
One hope as our law, one heaven,
Till slain be the great one wrong ;
Till the people it could not slay,
Risen up, have for one star seven,
For a single, a sevenfold song.

THE OBLATION

Ask nothing more of me, sweet ;
All I can give you I give.
Heart of my heart, were it more,
More would be laid at your feet :
Love that should help you to live,
Song that should spur you to soar.

All things were nothing to give
Once to have sense of you more,
Touch you and taste of you sweet,
Think you and breathe you and live,
Swept of your wings as they soar,
Trodden by chance of your feet.

I that have love and no more
Give you but love of you, sweet :
He that hath more, let him give ;
He that hath wings, let him soar ;
Mine is the heart at your feet
Here, that must love you to live.

A YEAR'S BURDEN

1870

Fire and wild light of hope and doubt and fear,
Wind of swift change, and clouds and hours that veer
As the storm shifts of the tempestuous year;
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

Hope sits yet hiding her war-wearied eyes,
Doubt sets her forehead earthward and denies,
But fear brought hand to hand with danger dies,
Dies and is burnt up in the fire of fight.

Hearts bruised with loss and eaten through with shame
Turn at the time's touch to devouring flame;
Grief stands as one that knows not her own name,
Nor if the star she sees bring day or night.

No song breaks with it on the violent air,
But shrieks of shame, defeat, and brute despair;
Yet something at the star's heart far up there
Burns as a beacon in our shipwrecked sight.

O strange fierce light of presage, unknown star,
Whose tongue shall tell us what thy secrets are,
What message trembles in thee from so far?
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

From shores laid waste across an iron sea
Where the waifs drift of hopes that were to be,
Aross the red rolled foam we look for thee,
  Across the fire we look up for the light.

From days laid waste across disastrous years,
From hopes cut down across a world of fears,
We gaze with eyes too passionate for tears,
  Where faith abides though hope be put to flight.

Old hope is dead, the grey-haired hope grown blind
That talked with us of old things out of mind,
Dreams, deeds and men the world has left behind ;
  Yet, though hope die, faith lives in hope's despite.

Ay, with hearts fixed on death and hopeless hands
We stand about our banner while it stands
Above but one field of the ruined lands ;
  Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

Though France were given for prey to bird and beast,
Though Rome were rent in twain of king and priest,
The soul of man, the soul is safe at least
  That gives death life and dead men hands to smite.

Are ye so strong, O kings, O strong men ? Nay,
Waste all ye will and gather all ye may,
Yet one thing is there that ye shall not slay,
  Even thought, that fire nor iron can affright.

The woundless and invisible thought that goes
Free throughout time as north or south wind blows,
Far throughout space as east or west sea flows,
  And all dark things before it are made bright.

Thy thought, thy word, O soul republican,
O spirit of life, O God whose name is man:
What sea of sorrows but thy sight shall span?
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

With all its coils crushed, all its rings uncurled,
The one most poisonous worm that soiled the world
Is wrenched from off the throat of man, and hurled
Into deep hell from empire's helpless height.

Time takes no more infection of it now;
Like a dead snake divided of the plough,
The rotten thing lies cut in twain; but thou,
Thy fires shall heal us of the serpent's bite.

Ay, with red cautery and a burning brand
Purge thou the leprous leaven of the land;
Take to thee fire, and iron in thine hand,
Till blood and tears have washed the soiled limbs white.

We have sinned against thee in dreams and wicked sleep;
Smite, we will shrink not; strike, we will not weep;
Let the heart feel thee; let thy wound go deep;
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

Wound us with love, pierce us with longing, make
Our souls thy sacrifices; turn and take
Our hearts for our sin-offerings lest they break,
And mould them with thine hands and give them might.

Then, when the cup of ills is drained indeed,
Will we come to thee with our wounds that bleed,
With famished mouths and hearts that thou shalt
feed,
And see thee worshipped as the world's delight.

There shall be no more wars nor kingdoms won,
But in thy sight whose eyes are as the sun
All names shall be one name, all nations one,
All souls of men in man's one soul unite.

O sea whereon men labour, O great sea
That heaven seems one with, shall these things not
be?
O earth, our earth, shall time not make us free?
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

EPILOGUE

Between the wave-ridge and the strand
I let you forth in sight of land,
  Songs that with storm-crossed wings and eyes
  Strain eastward till the darkness dies ;
Let signs and beacons fall or stand,
  And stars and balefires set and rise ;
Ye, till some lordlier lyric hand
  Weave the beloved brows their crown,
  At the beloved feet lie down.

O, whatsoever of life or light
Love hath to give you, what of might
  Or heart or hope is yours to live,
  I charge you take in trust to give
For very love's sake, in whose sight,
  Through poise of hours alternative
And seasons plumed with light or night,
  Ye live and move and have your breath
  To sing with on the ridge of death.

I charge you faint not all night through
For love's sake that was breathed on you
  To be to you as wings and feet
  For travel, and as blood to heat
And sense of spirit to renew

And bloom of fragrance to keep sweet
And fire of purpose to keep true
The life, if life in such things be,
That I would give you forth of me.

Out where the breath of war may bear,
Out in the rank moist reddened air
That sounds and smells of death, and hath
No light but death's upon its path
Seen through the black wind's tangled hair,
I send you past the wild time's wrath
To find his face who bade you bear
Fruit of his seed to faith and love,
That he may take the heart thereof.

By day or night, by sea or street,
Fly till ye find and clasp his feet
And kiss as worshippers who bring
Too much love on their lips to sing,
But with hushed heads accept and greet
The presence of some heavenlier thing
In the near air ; so may ye meet
His eyes, and droop not utterly
For shame's sake at the light you see.

Not utterly struck spiritless
For shame's sake and unworthiness
Of these poor forceless hands that come
Empty, these lips that should be dumb,
This love whose seal can but impress
These weak word-offerings wearisome
Whose blessings have not strength to bless
Nor lightnings fire to burn up aught
Nor smite with thunders of their thought.

One thought they have, even love ; one light,
Truth, that keeps clear the sun by night ;
  One chord, of faith as of a lyre ;
  One heat, of hope as of a fire ;
One heart, one music, and one might,
  One flame, one altar, and one choir ;
And one man's living head in sight
  Who said, when all time's sea was foam,
  "Let there be Rome"—and there was Rome.

As a star set in space for token
Like a live word of God's mouth spoken,
  Visible sound, light audible,
  In the great darkness thick as hell
A stanchless flame of love unsloken,
  A sign to conquer and compel,
A law to stand in heaven unbroken
  Whereby the sun shines, and wherethrough
  Time's eldest empires are made new ;

So rose up on our generations
That light of the most ancient nations,
  Law, life, and light, on the world's way,
  The very God of very day,
The sun-god ; from their star-like stations
  Far down the night in disarray
Fled, crowned with fires of tribulations,
  The suns of sunless years, whose light
  And life and law were of the night.

The naked kingdoms quenched and stark
Drave with their dead things down the dark,
  Helmless ; their whole world, throne by throne,
  Fell, and its whole heart turned to stone.

Hopeless ; their hands that touched our ark
Withered ; and lo, aloft, alone,
On time's white waters man's one bark,
Where the red sundawn's open eye
Lit the soft gulf of low green sky.

So for a season piloted
It sailed the sunlight, and struck red
With fire of dawn reverberate
The wan face of incumbent fate
That paused half pitying overhead
And almost had foregone the freight
Of those dark hours the next day bred
For shame, and almost had forsworn
Service of night for love of morn.

Then broke the whole night in one blow,
Thundering ; then all hell with one throe
Heaved, and brought forth beneath the stroke
Death ; and all dead things moved and woke
That the dawn's arrows had brought low,
At the great sound of night that broke
Thundering, and all the old world-wide woe ;
And under night's loud-sounding dome
Men sought her, and she was not Rome.

Still with blind hands and robes blood-wet
Night hangs on heaven, reluctant yet,
With black blood dripping from her eyes
On the soiled lintels of the skies,
With brows and lips that thirst and threat,
Heart-sick with fear lest the sun rise,
And aching with her fires that set,
And shuddering ere dawn bursts her bars,
Burns out with all her beaten stars.

In this black wind of war they fly
Now, ere that hour be in the sky
  That brings back hope, and memory back,
  And light and law to lands that lack ;
That spiritual sweet hour whereby
  The bloody-handed night and black
Shall be cast out of heaven to die ;
  Kingdom by kingdom, crown by crown,
  The fires of darkness are blown down.

Yet heavy, grievous yet the weight
Sits on us of imperfect fate.
  From wounds of other days and deeds
  Still this day's breathing body bleeds ;
Still kings for fear and slaves for hate
  Sow lives of men on earth like seeds
In the red soil they saturate ;
  And we, with faces eastward set,
  Stand sightless of the morning yet.

And many for pure sorrow's sake
Look back and stretch back hands to take
  Gifts of night's giving, ease and sleep,
  Flowers of night's grafting, strong to steep
The soul in dreams it will not break,
  Songs of soft hours that sigh and sweep
Its lifted eyelids nigh to wake
  With subtle plumes and lulling breath
  That soothe its weariness to death.

And many, called of hope and pride,
Fall ere the sunrise from our side.
  Fresh lights and rumours of fresh fames
  That shift and veer by night like flames,

Shouts and blown trumpets, ghosts that glide
  Calling, and hail them by dead names,
Fears, angers, memories, dreams divide
  Spirit from spirit, and wear out
  Strong hearts of men with hope and doubt.

Till time beget and sorrow bear
The soul-sick eyeless child despair,
  That comes among us, mad and blind,
  With counsels of a broken mind,
Tales of times dead and woes that were,
  And, prophesying against mankind,
Shakes out the horror of her hair
  To take the sunlight with its coils
  And hold the living soul in toils.

By many ways of death and moods
Souls pass into their servitudes.
  Their young wings weaken, plume by plume
  Drops, and their eyelids gather gloom
And close against man's frauds and feuds,
  And their tongues call they know not whom
To help in their vicissitudes ;
  For many slaveries are, but one
  Liberty, single as the sun.

One light, one law, that burns up strife,
And one sufficiency of life.
  Self-stablished, the sufficing soul
  Hears the loud wheels of changes roll,
Sees against man man bare the knife,
  Sees the world severed, and is whole ;
Sees force take dowerless fraud to wife,
  And fear from fraud's incestuous bed
  Crawl forth and smite his father dead :

Sees death made drunk with war, sees time
Weave many-coloured crime with crime,
State overthrown on ruining state,
And dares not be disconsolate.
Only the soul hath feet to climb,
Only the soul hath room to wait,
Hath brows and eyes to hold sublime
Above all evil and all good,
All strength and all decrepitude.

She only, she since earth began,
The many-minded soul of man,
From one incognizable root
That bears such divers-coloured fruit
Hath ruled for blessing or for ban
The flight of seasons and pursuit;
She regent, she republican,
With wide and equal eyes and wings
Broods on things born and dying things.

Even now for love or doubt of us
The hour intense and hazardous
Hangs high with pinions vibrating
Whereto the light and darkness cling,
Dividing the dim season thus,
And shakes from one ambiguous wing
Shadow, and one is luminous,
And day falls from it; so the past
Torments the future to the last.

And we that cannot hear or see
The sounds and lights of liberty,
The witness of the naked God
That treads on burning hours unshod

With instant feet unwounded ; we
  That can trace only where he trod
By fire in heaven or storm at sea,
  Not know the very present whole
  And naked nature of the soul ;

We that see wars and woes and kings,
And portents of enormous things,
  Empires, and agonies, and slaves,
  And whole flame of town-swallowing graves ;
That hear the harsh hours clap sharp wings
  Above the roar of ranks like waves,
From wreck to wreck as the world swings ;
  Know but that men there are who see
  And hear things other far than we.

By the light sitting on their brows,
The fire wherewith their presence glows,
  The music falling with their feet,
  The sweet sense of a spirit sweet
That with their speech or motion grows
  And breathes and burns men's hearts with heat ;
By these signs there is none but knows
  Men who have life and grace to give,
  Men who have seen the soul and live.

By the strength sleeping in their eyes,
The lips whereon their sorrow lies
  Smiling, the lines of tears unshed,
  The large divine look of one dead
That speaks out of the breathless skies
  In silence, when the light is shed
Upon man's soul of memories ;
  The supreme look that sets love free,
  The look of stars and of the sea ;

By the strong patient godhead seen
Implicit in their mortal mien,
  The conscience of a God held still
  And thunders ruled by their own will
And fast-bound fires that might burn clean
  This worldly air that foul things fill,
And the afterglow of what has been,
  That, passing, shows us without word
  What they have seen, what they have heard;

By all these keen and burning signs
The spirit knows them and divines.
  In bonds, in banishment, in grief,
  Scoffed at and scourged with unbelief,
Foiled with false trusts and thwart designs,
  Stripped of green days and hopes in leaf,
Their mere bare body of glory shines
  Higher, and man gazing surelier sees
  What light, what comfort is of these.

So I now gazing; till the sense
Being set on fire of confidence
  Strains itself sunward, feels out far
  Beyond the bright and morning star,
Beyond the extreme wave's refluence,
  To where the fierce first sunbeams are
Whose fire intolerant and intense
  As birthpangs whence day burns to be
  Parts breathless heaven from breathing sea.

I see not, know not, and am blest,
Master, who know that thou knowest,
  Dear lord and leader, at whose hand
  The first days and the last days stand,

With scars and crowns on head and breast,
That fought for love of the sweet land
Or shall fight in her latter quest ;
All the days armed and girt and crowned
Whose glories ring thy glory round.

Thou sawest, when all the world was blind,
The light that should be of mankind,
The very day that was to be ;
And how shalt thou not sometime see
Thy city perfect to thy mind
Stand face to living face with thee,
And no miscrowned man's head behind ;
The hearth of man, the human home,
The central flame that shall be Rome ?

As one that ere a June day rise
Makes seaward for the dawn, and tries
The water with delighted limbs
That taste the sweet dark sea, and swims
Right eastward under strengthening skies,
And sees the gradual rippling rims
Of waves whence day breaks blossom-wise
Take fire ere light peer well above,
And laughs from all his heart with love ;

And softlier swimming with raised head
Feels the full flower of morning shed
And fluent sunrise round him rolled
That laps and laves his body bold
With fluctuant heaven in water's stead,
And urgent through the growing gold
Strikes, and sees all the spray flash red,
And his soul takes the sun, and yearns
For joy wherewith the sea's heart burns ;

So the soul seeking through the dark
Heavenward, a dove without an ark,
  Transcends the unnavigable sea
  Of years that wear out memory;
So calls, a sunward-singing lark,
  In the ear of souls that should be free;
So points them toward the sun for mark
  Who steer not for the stress of waves,
  And seek strange helmsmen, and are slaves.

For if the swimmer's eastward eye
Must see no sunrise—must put by
  The hope that lifted him and led
  Once, to have light about his head,
To see beneath the clear low sky
  The green foam-whitened wave wax red
And all the morning's banner fly—
  Then, as earth's helpless hopes go down,
  Let earth's self in the dark tides drown.

Yea, if no morning must behold
Man, other than were they now cold,
  And other deeds than past deeds done,
  Nor any near or far-off sun
Salute him risen and sunlike-souled,
  Free, boundless, fearless, perfect, one,
Let man's world die like worlds of old,
  And here in heaven's sight only be
  The sole sun on the worldless sea.

NOTES

P. 7

That called on Cotys by her name.

Σεμνὰ Κότυς ἐν τοῖς Ἠδωνοῖς.

Æsch. Fr. 54 (Ἠδωνοί).

P. 94

Was it Love brake forth flower-fashion, a bird with gold on his wings?

Ar. Av. 696.

P. 161

That saw Saint Catherine bodily.

Her pilgrimage to Avignon to recall the Pope into Italy as its redeemer from the distractions of the time is of course the central act of St. Catherine's life, the great abiding sign of the greatness of spirit and genius of heroism which distinguished this daughter of the people, and should yet keep her name fresh above the holy horde of saints, in other records than the calendar; but there is no less significance in the story which tells how she succeeded in humanizing a criminal under sentence of death, and given over by the priests as a soul doomed and desperate; how the man thus raised and melted out of his fierce and brutal despair besought her to sustain him to the last by her presence; how, having accompanied him with comfort and support to the very scaffold, and seen his head fall, she took it up, and turning to the spectators who stood doubtful whether the poor wretch could be "saved," kissed it in sign of her faith that his sins were forgiven him. The high and fixed passion of her heroic temperament gives her a right to remembrance and honour of which the miracle-mongers have done

their best to deprive her. Cleared of all the refuse rubbish of thaumaturgy, her life would deserve a chronicler who should do justice at once to the ardour of her religious imagination and to a thing far rarer and more precious—the strength and breadth of patriotic thought and devotion which sent this girl across the Alps to seek the living symbol of Italian hope and unity, and bring it back by force of simple appeal in the name of God and of the country. By the light of those solid and actual qualities which ensure to her no ignoble place on the noble roll of Italian women who have deserved well of Italy, the record of her visions and ecstasies may be read without contemptuous intolerance of hysterical disease. The rapturous visionary and passionate ascetic was in plain matters of this earth as pure and practical a heroine as Joan of Arc.

P. 164

There on the dim side-chapel wall.

In the church of San Domenico.

P. 165

But blood nor tears ye love not, you.

In the Sienese Academy the two things notable to me were the detached wall-painting by Sodoma of the tortures of Christ bound to the pillar, and the divine though mutilated group of the Graces in the centre of the main hall. The glory and beauty of ancient sculpture refresh and satisfy beyond expression a sense wholly wearied and well-nigh nauseated with contemplation of endless sanctities and agonies attempted by mediæval art, while yet as handless as accident or barbarism has left the sculptured goddesses.

P. 168

Saw all Italian things save one.

O patria mia, vedo le mura e gli archi,
E le colonne e i simulacri e l'erme
Torri degli avi nostri;
Ma la gloria non vedo,
Non vedo il lauro e il ferro ond' eran carchi
I nostri padri antichi.

LEOPARDI.

P. 179

Mother, that by that Pegasean spring.

Call. Lav. Pall. 105-112.

P. 229

With black blood dripping from her eyes.

κἀξ ὀμμάτων στάζουσιν αἷμα δυσφιλές.

Æsch. Cho. 1058.

SONGS OF TWO NATIONS

I. A SONG OF ITALY

II. ODE ON THE PROCLAMATION OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

III. DIRÆ

I saw the double-featured statue stand
Of Memnon or of Janus, half with night
Veiled, and fast bound with iron; half with light
Crowned, holding all men's future in his hand.

And all the old westward face of time grown grey
Was writ with cursing and inscribed for death;
But on the face that met the morning's breath
Fear died of hope as darkness dies of day.

A SONG OF ITALY

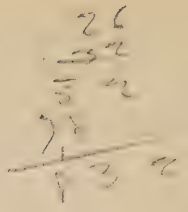
INSCRIBED

WITH ALL DEVOTION AND REVERENCE

TO

JOSEPH MAZZINI

1867



A SONG OF ITALY

Upon a windy night of stars that fell
At the wind's spoken spell,
Swept with sharp strokes of agonizing light
From the clear gulf of night,
Between the fixed and fallen glories one
Against my vision shone,
More fair and fearful and divine than they
That measure night and day,
And worthier worship ; and within mine eyes
The formless folded skies
Took shape and were unfolded like as flowers.
And I beheld the hours
As maidens, and the days as labouring men,
And the soft nights again
As wearied women to their own souls wed,
And ages as the dead.
And over these living, and them that died,
From one to the other side
A lordlier light than comes of earth or air
Made the world's future fair.
A woman like to love in face, but not
A thing of transient lot—
And like to hope, but having hold on truth—
And like to joy or youth,

Save that upon the rock her feet were set—
And like what men forget,
Faith, innocence, high thought, laborious peace—
And yet like none of these,
Being not as these are mortal, but with eyes
That sounded the deep skies
And clove like wings or arrows their clear way
Through night and dawn and day—
So fair a presence over star and sun
Stood, making these as one.
For in the shadow of her shape were all
Darkened and held in thrall,
So mightier rose she past them ; and I felt
Whose form, whose likeness knelt
With covered hair and face and clasped her knees ;
And knew the first of these
Was Freedom, and the second Italy.
And what sad words said she
For mine own grief I knew not, nor had heart
Therewith to bear my part
And set my songs to sorrow ; nor to hear
How tear by sacred tear
Fell from her eyes as flowers or notes that fall
In some slain feaster's hall
Where in mid music and melodious breath
Men singing have seen death.
So fair, so lost, so sweet she knelt ; or so
In our lost eyes below
Seemed to us sorrowing ; and her speech being said,
Fell, as one who falls dead.
And for a little she too wept, who stood
Above the dust and blood
And thrones and troubles of the world ; then spake,
As who bids dead men wake.

"Because the years were heavy on thy head ;
Because dead things are dead ;
Because thy chosen on hill-side, city and plain
Are shed as drops of rain ;
Because all earth was black, all heaven was blind,
And we cast out of mind ;
Because men wept, saying *Freedom*, knowing of thee,
Child, that thou wast not free ;
Because wherever blood was not shame was
Where thy pure foot did pass ;
Because on Promethean rocks distent
Thee fouler eagles rent ;
Because a serpent stains with slime and foam
This that is not thy Rome ;
Child of my womb, whose limbs were made in me,
Have I forgotten thee ?
In all thy dreams through all these years on wing,
Hast thou dreamed such a thing ?
The mortal mother-bird outsoars her nest,
The child outgrows the breast ;
But suns as stars shall fall from heaven and cease,
Ere we twain be as these ;
Yea, utmost skies forget their utmost sun,
Ere we twain be not one.
My lesser jewels sewn on skirt and hem,
I have no heed of them
Obscured and flawed by sloth or craft or power ;
But thou, that wast my flower,
The blossom bound between my brows and worn
In sight of even and morn
From the last ember of the flameless west
To the dawn's baring breast—
I were not Freedom if thou wert not free,
Nor thou wert Italy.

O mystic rose ingrained with blood, impearled
With tears of all the world!
The torpor of their blind brute-ridden trance
Kills England and chills France;
And Spain sobs hard through strangling blood; and snows
Hide the huge eastern woes.
But thou, twin-born with morning, nursed of noon,
And blessed of star and moon!
What shall avail to assail thee any more,
From sacred shore to shore?
Have Time and Love not knelt down at thy feet,
Thy sore, thy soiled, thy sweet,
Fresh from the flints and mire of murderous ways
And dust of travelling days?
Hath Time not kissed them, Love not washed them fair,
And wiped with tears and hair?
Though God forget thee, I will not forget;
Though heaven and earth be set
Against thee, O unconquerable child,
Abused, abased, reviled,
Lift thou not less from no funereal bed
Thine undishonoured head;
Love thou not less, by lips of thine once prest,
This my now barren breast;
Seek thou not less, being well assured thereof,
O child, my latest love.
For now the barren bosom shall bear fruit,
Songs leap from lips long mute,
And with my milk the mouths of nations fed
Again be glad and red
That were worn white with hunger and sorrow and thirst;
And thou, most fair and first,

Thou whose warm hands and sweet live lips I feel
Upon me for a seal,
Thou whose least looks, whose smiles and little sighs,
Whose passionate pure eyes,
Whose dear fair limbs that neither bonds could bruise
Nor hate of men misuse,
Whose flower-like breath and bosom, O my child,
O mine and undefiled,
Fill with such tears as burn like bitter wine
These mother's eyes of mine,
Thrill with huge passions and primeval pains
The fullness of my veins,
O sweetest head seen higher than any stands,
I touch thee with mine hands,
I lay my lips upon thee, O thou most sweet,
To lift thee on thy feet
And with the fire of mine to fill thine eyes ;
I say unto thee, Arise."

She ceased, and heaven was full of flame and sound,
And earth's old limbs unbound
Shone and waxed warm with fiery dew and seed
Shed through her at this her need :
And highest in heaven, a mother and full of grace,
With no more covered face,
With no more lifted hands and bended knees,
Rose, as from sacred seas
Love, when old time was full of plenteous springs,
That fairest-born of things,
The land that holds the rest in tender thrall
For love's sake in them all,

That binds with words and holds with eyes and hands
All hearts in all men's lands.
So died the dream whence rose the live desire
That here takes form and fire,
A spirit from the splendid grave of sleep
Risen, that ye should not weep,
Should not weep more nor ever, O ye that hear
And ever have held her dear,
Seeing now indeed she weeps not who wept sore,
And sleeps not any more.
Hearken ye towards her, O people, exalt your eyes;
Is this a thing that dies?

Italia! by the passion of the pain
That bent and rent thy chain;
Italia! by the breaking of the bands,
The shaking of the lands;
Beloved, O men's mother, O men's queen,
Arise, appear, be seen!
Arise, array thyself in manifold
Queen's raiment of wrought gold;
With girdles of green freedom, and with red
Roses, and white snow shed
Above the flush and frondage of the hills
That all thy deep dawn fills
And all thy clear night veils and warms with wings
Spread till the morning sings;
The rose of resurrection, and the bright
Breast lavish of the light,
The lady lily like the snowy sky
Ere the stars wholly die;
As red as blood, and whiter than a wave,
Flowers grown as from thy grave,

From the green fruitful grass in Maytime hot,
Thy grave, where thou art not.
Gather the grass and weave, in sacred sign
Of the ancient earth divine,
The holy heart of things, the seed of birth,
The mystical warm earth.
O thou her flower of flowers, with treble braid
Be thy sweet head arrayed,
In witness of her mighty motherhood
Who bore thee and found thee good,
Her fairest-born of children, on whose head
Her green and white and red
Are hope and light and life, inviolate
Of any latter fate.
Fly, O our flag, through deep Italian air,
Above the flags that were,
The dusty shreds of shameful battle-flags
Trampled and rent in rags,
As withering woods in autumn's bitterest breath
Yellow, and black as death ;
Black as crushed worms that sicken in the sense,
And yellow as pestilence.
Fly, green as summer and red as dawn and white
As the live heart of light,
The blind bright womb of colour unborn, that brings
Forth all fair forms of things,
As freedom all fair forms of nations dyed
In divers-coloured pride.
Fly fleet as wind on every wind that blows
Between her seas and snows,
From Alpine white, from Tuscan green, and where
Vesuvius reddens air.
Fly ! and let all men see it, and all kings wail
And priests wax faint and pale,

And the cold hordes that moan in misty places
And the funereal races
And the sick serfs of lands that wait and wane
See thee and hate thee in vain.
In the clear laughter of all winds and waves,
In the blown grass of graves,
In the long sound of fluctuant boughs of trees,
In the broad breath of seas,
Bid the sound of thy flying folds be heard ;
And as a spoken word
Full of that fair god and that merciless
Who rends the Pythoness,
So be the sound and so the fire that saith
She feels her ancient breath
And the old blood move in her immortal veins.

Strange travail and strong pains,
Our mother, hast thou borne these many years
While thy pure blood and tears
Mixed with the Tyrrhene and the Adrian sea ;
Light things were said of thee,
As of one buried deep among the dead ;
Yea, she hath been, they said,
She was when time was younger, and is not ;
The very cerecloths rot
That flutter in the dusty wind of death,
Not moving with her breath ;
Far seasons and forgotten years enfold
Her dead corpse old and cold
With many windy winters and pale springs :
She is none of this world's things.
Though her dead head like a live garland wear
The golden-growing hair

That flows over her breast down to her feet,
Dead queens, whose life was sweet
In sight of all men living, have been found
So cold, so clad, so crowned,
With all things faded and with one thing fair,
Their old immortal hair,
When flesh and bone turned dust at touch of day :
And she is dead as they.

So men said sadly, mocking ; so the slave,
Whose life was his soul's grave ;
So, pale or red with change of fast and feast,
The sanguine-sandalled priest ;
So the Austrian, when his fortune came to flood,
And the warm wave was blood ;
With wings that widened and with beak that smote,
So shrieked through either throat
From the hot horror of its northern nest
That double-headed pest ;
So, triple-crowned with fear and fraud and shame,
He of whom treason came,
The herdsman of the Gadarean swine ;
So all his ravening kine,
Made fat with poisonous pasture ; so not we,
Mother, beholding thee.
Make answer, O the crown of all our slain,
Ye that were one, being twain,
Twain brethren, twin-born to the second birth,
Chosen out of all our earth
To be the prophesying stars that say
How hard is night on day,
Stars in serene and sudden heaven rerisen
Before the sun break prison

And ere the moon be wasted ; fair first flowers
In that red wreath of ours
Woven with the lives of all whose lives were shed
To crown their mother's head
With leaves of civic cypress and thick yew,
Till the olive bind it too,
Olive and laurel and all loftier leaves
That victory wears or weaves
At her fair feet for her beloved brow ;
Hear, for she too hears now,
O Pisacane, from Calabrian sands ;
O all heroic hands
Close on the sword-hilt, hands of all her dead ;
O many a holy head,
Bowed for her sake even to her reddening dust ;
O chosen, O pure and just,
Who counted for a small thing life's estate,
And died, and made it great ;
Ye whose names mix with all her memories ; ye
Who rather chose to see
Death, than our more intolerable things ;
Thou whose name withers kings,
Agesilao ; thou too, O chiefliest thou,
The slayer of splendid brow,
Laid where the lying lips of fear deride
The foiled tyrannicide,
Foiled, fallen, slain, scorned, and happy ; being in fame,
Felice, like thy name,
Not like thy fortune ; father of the fight,
Having in hand our light.
Ah, happy ! for that sudden-swerving hand
Flung light on all thy land,

Yea, lit blind France with compulsory ray,
Driven down a righteous way ;
Ah, happiest ! for from thee the wars began,
From thee the fresh springs ran ;
From thee the lady land that queens the earth
Gat as she gave new birth.
O sweet mute mouths, O all fair dead of ours,
Fair in her eyes as flowers,
Fair without feature, vocal without voice,
Strong without strength, rejoice !
Hear it with ears that hear not, and on eyes
That see not let it rise,
Rise as a sundawn ; be it as dew that drips
On dumb and dusty lips ;
Eyes have ye not, and see it ; neither ears,
And there is none but hears.
This is the same for whom ye bled and wept ;
She was not dead, but slept.
This is that very Italy which was
And is and shall not pass.

But thou, though all were not well done, O chief,
Must thou take shame or grief ?
Because one man is not as thou or ten,
Must thou take shame for men ?
Because the supreme sunrise is not yet,
Is the young dew not wet ?
Wilt thou not yet abide a little while,
Soul without fear or guile,
Mazzini,—O our prophet, O our priest,
A little while at least ?
A little hour of doubt and of control,
Sustain thy sacred soul ;
Withhold thine heart, our father, but an hour ;
Is it not here, the flower,

Is it not blown and fragrant from the root,
And shall not be the fruit?
Thy children, even thy people thou hast made,
Thine, with thy words arrayed,
Clothed with thy thoughts and girt with thy desires,
Yearn up toward thee as fires.
Art thou not father, O father, of all these?
From thine own Genoese
To where of nights the lower extreme lagune
Feels its Venetian moon,
Nor suckling's mouth nor mother's breast set free
But hath that grace through thee.
The milk of life on death's unnatural brink
Thou gavest them to drink,
The natural milk of freedom; and again
They drank, and they were men.
The wine and honey of freedom and of faith
They drank, and cast off death.
Bear with them now; thou art holier: yet endure,
Till they as thou be pure.
Their swords at least that stemmed half Austria's tide
Bade all its bulk divide;
Else, though fate bade them for a breath's space fall,
She had not fallen at all.
Not by their hands they made time's promise true;
Not by their hands, but through.
Nor on Custoza ran their blood to waste,
Nor fell their fame defaced
Whom stormiest Adria with tumultuous tides
Whirls undersea and hides.
Not his, who from the sudden-settling deck
Looked over death and wreck
To where the mother's bosom shone, who smiled
As he, so dying, her child;

For he smiled surely, dying, to mix his death
With her memorial breath ;
Smiled, being most sure of her, that in no wise,
Die whoso will, she dies :
And she smiled surely, fair and far above,
Wept not, but smiled for love.
Thou too, O splendour of the sudden sword
That drove the crews abhorred
From Naples and the siren-footed strand,
Flash from thy master's hand,
Shine from the middle summer of the seas
To the old Æolides,
Outshine their fiery fumes of burning night,
Sword, with thy midday light ;
Flame as a beacon from the Tyrrhene foam
To the rent heart of Rome,
From the island of her lover and thy lord,
Her saviour and her sword.
In the fierce year of failure and of fame,
Art thou not yet the same
That wast as lightning swifter than all wings
In the blind face of kings ?
When priests took counsel to devise despair,
And princes to forswear,
She clasped thee, O her sword and flag-bearer
And staff and shield to her,
O Garibaldi ; need was hers and grief,
Of thee and of the chief,
And of another girt in arms to stand
As good of hope and hand,
As high of soul and happy, albeit indeed
The heart should burn and bleed,
So but the spirit shake not nor the breast
Swerve, but abide its rest.

As theirs did and as thine, though ruin clomb
The highest wall of Rome,
Though treason stained and spilt her lustral water,
And slaves led slaves to slaughter,
And priests, praying and slaying, watched them pass
From a strange France, alas,
That was not freedom ; yet when these were past
Thy sword and thou stood fast,
Till new men seeing thee where Sicilian waves
Hear now no sound of slaves,
And where thy sacred blood is fragrant still
Upon the Bitter Hill,
Seeing by that blood one country saved and stained,
Less loved thee crowned than chained,
And less now only than the chief : for he,
Father of Italy,
Upbore in holy hands the babe new-born
Through loss and sorrow and scorn,
Of no man led, of many men reviled ;
Till lo, the new-born child
Gone from between his hands, and in its place,
Lo, the fair mother's face.
Blessed is he of all men, being in one
As father to her and son,
Blessed of all men living, that he found
Her weak limbs bared and bound,
And in his arms and in his bosom bore,
And as a garment wore
Her weight of want, and as a royal dress
Put on her weariness.
As in faith's hoariest histories men read,
The strong man bore at need
Through roaring rapids when all heaven was wild
The likeness of a child

That still waxed greater and heavier as he trod,
And altered, and was God.
Praise him, O winds that move the molten air,
O light of days that were,
And light of days that shall be ; land and sea,
And heaven and Italy :
Praise him, O storm and summer, shore and wave,
O skies and every grave ;
O weeping hopes, O memories beyond tears,
O many and murmuring years,
O sounds far off in time and visions far,
O sorrow with thy star,
And joy with all thy beacons ; ye that mourn,
And ye whose light is born ;
O fallen faces, and O souls arisen,
Praise him from tomb and prison,
Praise him from heaven and sunlight ; and ye floods,
And windy waves of woods ;
Ye valleys and wild vineyards, ye lit lakes
And happier hillside brakes,
Untrampled by the accursed feet that trod
Fields golden from their god,
Fields of their god forsaken, whereof none
Sees his face in the sun,
Hears his voice from the floweriest wildernesses ;
And, barren of his tresses,
Ye bays unplucked and laurels unentwined,
That no men break or bind,
And myrtles long forgetful of the sword.
And olives unadored,
Wisdom and love, white hands that save and slay,
Praise him ; and ye as they,
Praise him, O gracious might of dews and rains
That feed the purple plains,

O sacred sunbeams bright as bare steel drawn,
O cloud and fire and dawn ;
Red hills of flame, white Alps, green Apennines,
Banners of blowing pines,
Standards of stormy snows, flags of light leaves,
Three wherewith Freedom weaves
One ensign that once woven and once unfurled
Makes day of all a world,
Makes blind their eyes who knew not, and outbraves
The waste of iron waves ;
Ye fields of yellow fullness, ye fresh fountains,
And mists of many mountains ;
Ye moons and seasons, and ye days and nights ;
Ye starry-headed heights,
And gorges melting sunward from the snow
And all strong streams that flow,
Tender as tears, and fair as faith, and pure
As hearts made sad and sure
At once by many sufferings and one love ;
O mystic deathless dove
Held to the heart of earth and in her hands
Cherished, O lily of lands,
White rose of time, dear dream of praises past—
For such as these thou wast,
That art as eagles setting to the sun,
As fawns that leap and run,
As a sword carven with keen floral gold,
Sword for an armed god's hold,
Flower for a crowned god's forehead—O our land,
Reach forth thine holiest hand,
O mother of many sons and memories,
Stretch out thine hand to his
That raised and gave thee life to run and leap
When thou wast full of sleep,

That touched and stung thee with young blood
and breath
When thou wast hard on death.
Praise him, O all her cities and her crowns,
Her towers and thrones of towns ;
O noblest Brescia, scarred from foot to head
And breast-deep in thy dead,
Praise him from all the glories of thy graves
That yellow Mela laves
With gentle and golden water, whose fair flood
Ran wider with thy blood :
Praise him, O born of that heroic breast,
O nursed thereat and blest,
Verona, fairer than thy mother fair,
But not more brave to bear :
Praise him, O Milan, whose imperial tread
Bruised once the German head ;
Whose might, by northern swords left desolate,
Set foot on fear and fate :
Praise him, O long mute mouth of melodies,
Mantua, with louder keys,
With mightier chords of music even than rolled
From the large harps of old,
When thy sweet singer of golden throat and tongue,
Praising his tyrant, sung ;
Though now thou sing not as of other days,
Learn late a better praise.
Not with the sick sweet lips of slaves that sing,
Praise thou no priest or king,
No brow-bound laurel of discoloured leaf,
But him, the crownless chief.
Praise him, O star of sun-forgotten times,
Among their creeds and crimes

That wast a fire of witness in the night,
Padua, the wise men's light :
Praise him, O sacred Venice, and the sea
That now exults through thee,
Full of the mighty morning and the sun,
Free of things dead and done ;
Praise him from all the years of thy great grief,
That shook thee like a leaf
With winds and snows of torment, rain that fell
Red as the rains of hell,
Storms of black thunder and of yellow flame,
And all ill things but shame ;
Praise him with all thy holy heart and strength ;
Through thy walls' breadth and length
Praise him with all thy people, that their voice
Bid the strong soul rejoice,
The fair clear supreme spirit beyond stain,
Pure as the depth of pain,
High as the head of suffering, and secure
As all things that endure.
More than thy blind lord of an hundred years
Whose name our memory hears,
Home-bound from harbours of the Byzantine
Made tributary of thine,
Praise him who gave no gifts from oversea,
But gave thyself to thee.
O mother Genoa, through all years that run,
More than that other son,
Who first beyond the seals of sunset prest
Even to the unfooted west,
Whose back-blown flag scared from their sheltering seas
The unknown Atlantides,

And as flame climbs through cloud and vapour clomb
Through streams of storm and foam,
Till half in sight they saw land heave and swim—
More than this man praise him.
One found a world new-born from virgin sea ;
And one found Italy.
O heavenliest Florence, from the mouths of flowers
Fed by melodious hours,
From each sweet mouth that kisses light and air,
Thou whom thy fate made fair,
As a bound vine or any flowering tree,
Praise him who made thee free.
For no grape-gatherers trampling out the wine
Tread thee, the fairest vine ;
For no man binds thee, no man bruises, none
Does with thee as these have done.
From where spring hears loud through her long lit vales
Triumphant nightingales,
In many a fold of fiery foliage hidden,
Withheld as things forbidden,
But clamorous with innumerable delight
In May's red, green, and white,
In the far-floated standard of the spring,
That bids men also sing,
Our flower of flags, our witness that we are free,
Our lamp for land and sea ;
From where Majano feels through corn and vine
Spring move and melt as wine,
And Fiesole's embracing arms enclose
The immeasurable rose ;
From hill-sides plumed with pine, and heights wind-worn
That feel the refluent morn,

Or where the moon's face warm and passionate
Burns, and men's hearts grow great,
And the swoln eyelids labour with sweet tears,
And in their burning ears
Sound throbs like flame, and in their eyes new light
Kindles the trembling night;
From faint illumined fields and starry valleys
Wherefrom the hill-wind sallies,
From Vallombrosa, from Valdarno raise
One Tuscan tune of praise.
O lordly city of the field of death,
Praise him with equal breath,
From sleeping streets and gardens, and the stream
That threads them as a dream
Threads without light the untravelled ways of sleep
With eyes that smile or weep;
From the sweet sombre beauty of wave and wall
That fades and does not fall;
From coloured domes and cloisters fair with fame,
Praise thou and thine his name.
Thou too, O little laurelled town of towers,
Clothed with the flame of flowers,
From windy ramparts girdled with young gold,
From thy sweet hillside fold
Of wallflowers and the acacia's belted bloom
And every blowing plume,
Halls that saw Dante speaking, chapels fair
As the outer hills and air,
Praise him who feeds the fire that Dante fed,
Our highest heroic head,
Whose eyes behold through floated cloud and flame
The maiden face of fame
Like April's in Valdelsa; fair as flowers,
And patient as the hours;

Sad with slow sense of time, and bright with faith
That levels life and death;
The final fame, that with a foot sublime
Treads down reluctant time;
The fame that waits and watches and is wise,
A virgin with chaste eyes,
A goddess who takes hands with great men's grief;
Praise her, and him, our chief.
Praise him, O Siena, and thou her deep green spring,
O Fonte Branda, sing:
Shout from the red clefts of thy fiery crags,
Shake out thy flying flags
In the long wind that streams from hill to hill;
Bid thy full music fill
The desolate red waste of sunset air
And fields the old time saw fair,
But now the hours ring void through ruined lands,
Wild work of mortal hands;
Yet through thy dead Maremma let his name
Take flight and pass in flame,
And the red ruin of disastrous hours
Shall quicken into flowers.
Praise him, O fiery child of sun and sea,
Naples, who bade thee be;
For till he sent the swords that scourge and save,
Thou wast not, but thy grave.
But more than all these praise him and give thanks,
Thou, from thy Tiber's banks,
From all thine hills and from thy supreme dome,
Praise him, O risen Rome.
Let all thy children cities at thy knee
Lift up their voice with thee,
Saying 'for thy love's sake and our perished grief
We laud thee, O our chief;'

Saying 'for thine hand and help when hope was dead
We thank thee, O our head;'
Saying 'for thy voice and face within our sight
We bless thee, O our light;
For waters cleansing us from days defiled
We praise thee, O our child.'

So with an hundred cities' mouths in one
Praising thy supreme son,
Son of thy sorrow, O mother, O maid and mother,
Our queen, who serve none other,
Our lady of pity and mercy, and full of grace,
Turn otherwhere thy face,
Turn for a little and look what things are these
Now fallen before thy knees;
Turn upon them thine eyes who hated thee,
Behold what things they be,
Italia: these are stubble that were steel,
Dust, or a turning wheel;
As leaves, as snow, as sand, that were so strong;
And howl, for all their song,
And wail, for all their wisdom; they that were
So great, they are all stript bare,
They are all made empty of beauty, and all abhorred;
They are shivered, and their sword;
They are slain who slew, they are heartless who were wise;
Yea, turn on these thine eyes,
O thou, soliciting with soul sublime
The obscure soul of time,
Thou, with the wounds thy holy body bears
From broken swords of theirs,

Thou, with the sweet swoln eyelids that have bled
Tears for thy thousands dead,
And upon these, whose swords drank up like dew
The sons of thine they slew,
These, whose each gun blasted with murdering mouth
Live flowers of thy fair south,
These, whose least evil told in alien ears
Turned men's whole blood to tears,
These, whose least sin remembered for pure shame
Turned all those tears to flame,
Even upon these, when breaks the extreme blow
And all the world cries woe,
When heaven reluctant rains long-suffering fire
On these and their desire,
When his wind shakes them and his waters whelm
Who rent thy robe and realm,
When they that poured thy dear blood forth as wine
Pour forth their own for thine,
On these, on these have mercy : not in hate,
But full of sacred fate,
Strong from the shrine and splendid from the god,
Smite, with no second rod.
Because they spared not, do thou rather spare :
Be not one thing they were.
Let not one tongue of theirs who hate thee say
That thou wast even as they.
Because their hands were bloody, be thine white ;
Show light where they shed night :
Because they are foul, be thou the rather pure ;
Because they are feeble, endure ;
Because they had no pity, have thou pity.

And thou, O supreme city,
O priestless Rome that shalt be, take in trust
Their names, their deeds, their dust,
Who held life less than thou wert ; be the least
To thee indeed a priest,
Priest and burnt-offering and blood-sacrifice
Given without prayer or price,
A holier immolation than men wist,
A costlier eucharist,
A sacrament more saving ; bend thine head
Above these many dead
Once, and salute with thine eternal eyes
Their lowest head that lies.
Speak from thy lips of immemorial speech
If but one word for each.
Kiss but one kiss on each thy dead son's mouth
Fallen dumb or north or south.
And laying but once thine hand on brow and breast,
Bless them, through whom thou art blest.
And saying in ears of these thy dead, " Well done,"
Shall they not hear " O son " ?
And bowing thy face to theirs made pale for thee,
Shall the shut eyes not see ?
Yea, through the hollow-hearted world of death,
As light, as blood, as breath,
Shall there not flash and flow the fiery sense,
The pulse of prescience ?
Shall not these know as in times overpast
Thee loftiest to the last ?
For times and wars shall change, kingdoms and creeds,
And dreams of men, and deeds ;
Earth shall grow grey with all her golden things,
Pale peoples and hoar kings ;

But though her thrones and towers of nations fall,
Death has no part in all;
In the air, nor in the imperishable sea,
Nor heaven, nor truth, nor thee.
Yea, let all sceptre-stricken nations lie,
But live thou though they die;
Let their flags fade as flowers that storm can mar,
But thine be like a star;
Let England's, if it float not for men free,
Fall, and forget the sea;
Let France's, if it shadow a hateful head,
Drop as a leaf drops dead;
Thine let what storm soever smite the rest
Smite as it seems him best;
Thine let the wind that can, by sea or land,
Wrest from thy banner-hand.
Die they in whom dies freedom, die and cease,
Though the world weep for these;
Live thou and love and lift when these lie dead
The green and white and red.

O our Republic that shalt bind in bands
The kingdomless far lands
And link the chainless ages; thou that wast
With England ere she past
Among the faded nations, and shalt be
Again, when sea to sea
Calls through the wind and light of morning time,
And throneless clime to clime
Makes antiphonal answer; thou that art
Where one man's perfect heart
Burns, one man's brow is brightened for thy sake,
Thine, strong to make or break;

O fair Republic hallowing with stretched hands
The limitless free lands,
When all men's heads for love, not fear, bow down
To thy sole royal crown,
As thou to freedom ; when man's life smells sweet,
And at thy bright swift feet
A bloodless and a bondless world is laid ;
Then, when thy men are made,
Let these indeed as we in dreams behold
One chosen of all thy fold,
One of all fair things fairest, one exalt
Above all fear or fault,
One unforgetful of unhappier men
And us who loved her then ;
With eyes that outlook suns and dream on graves ;
With voice like quiring waves ;
With heart the holier for their memories' sake
Who slept that she might wake ;
With breast the sweeter for that sweet blood lost,
And all the milkless cost ;
Lady of earth, whose large equality
Bends but to her and thee ;
Equal with heaven, and infinite of years,
And splendid from quenched tears ;
Strong with old strength of great things fallen and fled,
Diviner for her dead ;
Chaste of all stains and perfect from all scars,
Above all storms and stars,
All winds that blow through time, all waves that foam,
Our Capitolian Rome.

1867.

ODE

ON THE

PROCLAMATION

OF THE

FRENCH REPUBLIC

SEPTEMBER 4TH, 1870

À VICTOR HUGO

2G2

αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπὲ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω.

ODE ON THE PROCLAMATION OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Strophe 1

With songs and crying and sounds of acclamations,
  Lo, the flame risen, the fire that falls in showers!
Hark; for the word is out among the nations:
  Look; for the light is up upon the hours:
O fears, O shames, O many tribulations,
  Yours were all yesterdays, but this day ours.
Strong were your bonds linked fast with lamentations,
  With groans and tears built into walls and towers;
Strong were your works and wonders of high stations,
  Your forts blood-based, and rampires of your powers:
Lo now the last of divers desolations,
  The hand of time, that gathers hosts like flowers;
Time, that fills up and pours out generations;
  Time, at whose breath confounded empire cowers.

Str. 2

  What are these moving in the dawn's red gloom?
  What is she waited on by dread and doom,
Ill ministers of morning, bondmen born of night?

If that head veiled and bowed be morning's
head,
If she come walking between doom and dread,
Who shall rise up with song and dance before her
sight?

Are not the night's dead heaped about her feet?
Is not death swollen, and slaughter full of meat?
What, is their feast a bride-feast, where men sing
and dance?
A bitter, a bitter bride-song and a shrill
Should the house raise that such bride-followers
fill,
Wherein defeat weds ruin, and takes for bride-be
France.

For nineteen years deep shame and sore desire
Fed from men's hearts with hungering fangs of
fire,
And hope fell sick with famine for the food of
change.
Now is change come, but bringing funeral urns;
Now is day nigh, but the dawn blinds and
burns;
Now time long dumb hath language, but the tongue
is strange.

We that have seen her not our whole lives long,
We to whose ears her dirge was cradle-song,
The dirge men sang who laid in earth her living head,
Is it by such light that we live to see
Rise, with rent hair and raiment, Liberty?
Does her grave open only to restore her dead?

Ah, was it this we looked for, looked and prayed,
This hour that treads upon the prayers we made,
This ravening hour that breaks down good and ill alike?
Ah, was it thus we thought to see her and hear,
The one love indivisible and dear?
Is it her head that hands which strike down wrong must strike?

STR. 3

Where is hope, and promise where, in all these things,
Shocks of strength with strength, and jar of hurtling kings?
Who of all men, who will show us any good?
Shall these lightnings of blind battles give men light?
Where is freedom? who will bring us in her sight,
That have hardly seen her footprint where she stood?

STR. 4

Who is this that rises red with wounds and splendid,
All her breast and brow made beautiful with scars,
Burning bare as naked daylight, undefended,
In her hands for spoils her splintered prison-bars,
In her eyes the light and fire of long pain ended,
In her lips a song as of the morning stars?

STR. 5

O torn out of thy trance,
O deathless, O my France,
O many-wounded mother, O redeemed to reign!

O rarely sweet and bitter
The bright brief tears that glitter
On thine unclosing eyelids, proud of their own pain;
The beautiful brief tears
That wash the stains of years
White as the names immortal of thy chosen and slain.
O loved so much so long,
O smitten with such wrong,
O purged at last and perfect without spot or stain,
Light of the light of man,
Reborn republican,
At last, O first Republic, hailed in heaven again!
Out of the obscene eclipse
Rerisen, with burning lips
To witness for us if we looked for thee in vain.

STR. 6

Thou wast the light whereby men saw
Light, thou the trumpet of the law
Proclaiming manhood to mankind;
And what if all these years were blind
And shameful? Hath the sun a flaw
Because one hour hath power to draw
Mist round him wreathed as links to bind?
And what if now keen anguish drains
The very wellspring of thy veins
And very spirit of thy breath?
The life outlives them and disdains;
The sense which makes the soul remains,
And blood of thought which travaileth
To bring forth hope with procreant pains.
O thou that satest bound in chains
Between thine hills and pleasant plains

As whom his own soul vanquisheth,
Held in the bonds of his own thought,
Whence very death can take off nought,
Nor sleep, with bitterer dreams than death,
What though thy thousands at thy knees
Lie thick as grave-worms feed on these,
Though thy green fields and joyous places
Are populous with blood-blackening faces
And wan limbs eaten by the sun?
Better an end of all men's races,
Better the world's whole work were done,
And life wiped out of all our traces,
And there were left to time not one,
Than such as these that fill thy graves
Should sow in slaves the seed of slaves.

ANTISTROPHE I

Not of thy sons, O mother many-wounded,
Not of thy sons are slaves ingraffed and grown.
Was it not thine, the fire whence light rebounded
From kingdom on rekindling kingdom thrown,
From hearts confirmed on tyrannies confounded,
From earth on heaven, fire mightier than his own?
Not thine the breath wherewith time's clarion sounded
And all the terror in the trumpet blown?
The voice whereat the thunders stood astounded
As at a new sound of a God unknown?
And all the seas and shores within them bounded
Shook at the strange speech of thy lips alone,
And all the hills of heaven, the storm-surrounded,
Trembled, and all the night sent forth a groan.

ANT. 2

What hast thou done that such an hour should be
More than another clothed with blood to thee?
Thou hast seen many a bloodred hour before this one.
What art thou that thy lovers should misdoubt?
What is this hour that it should cast hope out?
If hope turn back and fall from thee, what hast thou done?

Thou hast done ill against thine own soul; yea,
Thine own soul hast thou slain and burnt away,
Dissolving it with poison into foul thin fume.
Thine own life and creation of thy fate
Thou hast set thine hand to unmake and discreate;
And now thy slain soul rises between dread and doom.

Yea, this is she that comes between them led;
That veiled head is thine own soul's buried head,
The head that was as morning's in the whole world's sight.
These wounds are deadly on thee, but deadlier
Those wounds the ravenous poison left on her;
How shall her weak hands hold thy weak hands up to fight?

Ah, but her fiery eyes, her eyes are these
That, gazing, make thee shiver to the knees
And the blood leap within thee, and the strong joy rise.

What, doth her sight yet make thine heart to
dance?
O France, O freedom, O the soul of France,
Are ye then quickened, gazing in each other's eyes?

Ah, and her words, the words wherewith she sought
thee
Sorrowing, and bare in hand the robe she wrought
thee
To wear when soul and body were again made one,
And fairest among women, and a bride,
Sweet-voiced to sing the bridegroom to her side,
The spirit of man, the bridegroom brighter than the
sun!

ANT. 3

Who shall help me? who shall take me by the hand?
Who shall teach mine eyes to see, my feet to stand,
Now my foes have stripped and wounded me by
night?
Who shall heal me? who shall come to take my
part?
Who shall set me as a seal upon his heart,
As a seal upon his arm made bare for fight?

ANT. 4

If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,
If thou see not where the signs of him abide,
Lift thine eyes up to the light that stars grow dim in,
To the morning whence he comes to take thy side.
None but he can bear the light that love wraps
him in,
When he comes on earth to take himself a bride.

ANT. 5

Light of light, name of names,
Whose shadows are live flames,
The soul that moves the wings of worlds upon their way;
Life, spirit, blood and breath
In time and change and death
Substant through strength and weakness, ardour and decay;
Lord of the lives of lands,
Spirit of man, whose hands
Weave the web through wherein man's centuries fall as prey;
That art within our will
Power to make, save, and kill,
Knowledge and choice, to take extremities and weigh;
In the soul's hand to smite
Strength, in the soul's eye sight;
That to the soul art even as is the soul to clay;
Now to this people be
Love; come, to set them free,
With feet that tread the night, with eyes that sound the day.

ANT. 6

Thou that wast on their fathers dead
As effluent God effused and shed,
Heaven to be handled, hope made flesh,
Break for them now time's iron mesh;
Give them thyself for hand and head,
Thy breath for life, thy love for bread,
Thy thought for spirit to refresh,

Thy bitterness to pierce and sting,
Thy sweetness for a healing spring.
Be to them knowledge, strength, life, light,
Thou to whose feet the centuries cling
And in the wide warmth of thy wing
Seek room and rest as birds by night,
O thou the kingless people's king,
To whom the lips of silence sing,
Called by thy name of thanksgiving
Freedom, and by thy name of might
Justice, and by thy secret name
Love; the same need is on the same
Men, be the same God in their sight!
From this their hour of bloody tears
Their praise goes up into thine ears,
Their bruised lips clothe thy name with praises,
The song of thee their crushed voice raises,
Their grief seeks joy for psalms to borrow,
With tired feet seeks her through time's mazes
Where each day's blood leaves pale the morrow,
And from their eyes in thine there gazes
A spirit other far than sorrow—
A soul triumphal, white and whole
And single, that salutes thy soul.

EPODE

All the lights of the sweet heaven that sing together;
All the years of the green earth that bare man free;
Rays and lightnings of the fierce or tender weather,
Heights and lowlands, wastes and headlands of the sea,
Dawns and sunsets, hours that hold the world in tether,
Be our witnesses and seals of things to be.

Lo the mother, the Republic universal,
Hands that hold time fast, hands feeding men with might,
Lips that sing the song of the earth, that make rehearsal
Of all seasons, and the sway of day with night,
Eyes that see as from a mountain the dispersal,
The huge ruin of things evil, and the flight ;
Large exulting limbs, and bosom godlike moulded
Where the man-child hangs, and womb wherein he lay ;
Very life that could it die would leave the soul dead,
Face whereat all fears and forces flee away,
Breath that moves the world as winds a flower-bell folded,
Feet that trampling the gross darkness beat out day.
In the hour of pain and pity,
Sore spent, a wounded city,
Her foster-child seeks to her, stately where she stands ;
In the utter hour of woes,
Wind-shaken, blind with blows,
Paris lays hold upon her, grasps her with child's hands ;
Face kindles face with fire,
Hearts take and give desire,
Strange joy breaks red as tempest on tormented lands.
Day to day, man to man,
Plights love republican,
And faith and memory burn with passion toward each other ;
Hope, with fresh heavens to track,
Looks for a breath's space back,
Where the divine past years reach hands to this their brother ;

And souls of men whose death
Was light to her and breath
Send word of love yet living to the living mother.
They call her, and she hears ;
O France, thy marvellous years,
The years of the strong travail, the triumphant time,
Days terrible with love,
Red-shod with flames thereof,
Call to this hour that breaks in pieces crown and crime ;
The hour with feet to spurn,
Hands to crush, fires to burn
The state whereto no latter foot of man shall climb.
Yea, come what grief now may
By ruinous night or day,
One grief there cannot, one the first and last grief, shame.
Come force to break thee and bow
Down, shame can come not now,
Nor, though hands wound thee, tongues make mockery of thy name :
Come swords and scar thy brow,
No brand there burns it now,
No spot but of thy blood marks thy white-fronted fame.
Now, though the mad blind morrow
With shafts of iron sorrow
Should split thine heart, and whelm thine head with sanguine waves ;
Though all that draw thy breath
Bled from all veins to death,
And thy dead body were the grave of all their graves,
And thine unchilded womb
For all their tombs a tomb,
At least within thee as on thee room were none for slaves.

This power thou hast, to be,
Come death or come not, free ;
That in all tongues of time's this praise be chanted of thee,
That in thy wild worst hour
This power put in thee power,
And moved as hope around and hung as heaven above thee,
And while earth sat in sadness
In only thee put gladness,
Put strength and love, to make all hearts of ages love thee.
That in death's face thy chant
Arose up jubilant,
And thy great heart with thy great peril grew more great :
And sweet for bitter tears
Put out the fires of fears,
And love made lovely for thee loveless hell and hate ;
And they that house with error,
Cold shame and burning terror,
Fled from truth risen and thee made mightier than thy fate.
This shall all years remember ;
For this thing shall September
Have only name of honour, only sign of white.
And this year's fearful name,
France, in thine house of fame
Above all names of all thy triumphs shalt thou write,
When, seeing thy freedom stand
Even at despair's right hand,
The cry thou gavest at heart was only of delight.

DIRÆ

Guai a voi, anime prave.

DANTE.

Soyez maudits, d'abord d'être ce que vous êtes,
Et puis soyez maudits d'obséder les poëtes !

VICTOR HUGO.

I

A DEAD KING

[*Ferdinand II. entered Malebolge May 22nd*, 1859.]

Go down to hell. This end is good to see ;
  The breath is lightened and the sense at ease
  Because thou art not ; sense nor breath there is
In what thy body was, whose soul shall be
Chief nerve of hell's pained heart eternally.
  Thou art abolished from the midst of these
  That are what thou wast : Pius from his knees
Blows off the dust that flecked them, bowed for thee.
Yea, now the long-tongued slack-lipped litanies
  Fail, and the priest has no more prayer to sell—
Now the last Jesuit found about thee is
  The beast that made thy fouler flesh his cell—
Time lays his finger on thee, saying, " Cease ;
  Here is no room for thee ; go down to hell."

II

A YEAR AFTER

If blood throbs yet in this that was thy face,
O thou whose soul was full of devil's faith,
If in thy flesh the worm's bite slackeneth
In some acute red pause of iron days,
Arise now, gird thee, get thee on thy ways,
Breathe off the worm that crawls and fears not breath;
King, it may be thou shalt prevail on death;
King, it may be thy soul shall find out grace.
O spirit that hast eased the place of Cain,
Weep now and howl, yea weep now sore; for this
That was thy kingdom hath spat out its king.
Wilt thou plead now with God? behold again,
Thy prayer for thy son's sake is turned to a hiss,
Thy mouth to a snake's whose slime outlives the sting.

III

PETER'S PENCE FROM PERUGIA

Iscariot, thou grey-grown beast of blood,
Stand forth to plead ; stand, while red drops run here
And there down fingers shaken with foul fear,
Down the sick shivering chin that stooped and sued,
Bowed to the bosom, for a little food
At Herod's hand, who smites thee cheek and ear.
Cry out, Iscariot ; haply he will hear ;
Cry, till he turn again to do thee good.
Gather thy gold up, Judas, all thy gold,
And buy thee death ; no Christ is here to sell,
But the dead earth of poor men bought and sold,
While year heaps year above thee safe in hell,
To grime thy grey dishonourable head
With dusty shame, when thou art damned and dead.

IV

PAPAL ALLOCUTION

"Populo mi, quid tibi feci?"

What hast thou done? Hark, till thine ears wax hot,
Judas; for these and these things hast thou done.
Thou hast made earth faint, and sickened the sweet sun,
With fume of blood that reeks from limbs that rot;
Thou hast washed thine hands and mouth, saying, "Am I not
Clean?" and thy lips were bloody, and there was none
To speak for man against thee, no, not one;
This hast thou done to us, Iscariot.
Therefore, though thou be deaf and heaven be dumb,
A cry shall be from under to proclaim
In the ears of all who shed men's blood or sell
Pius the Ninth, Judas the Second, come
Where Boniface out of the filth and flame
Barks for his advent in the clefts of hell.[1]

[1] Dante, "Inferno," xix. 53.

V

THE BURDEN OF AUSTRIA

1866

O DAUGHTER of pride, wasted with misery,
With all the glory that thy shame put on
Stripped off thy shame, O daughter of Babylon,
Yea, whoso be it, yea, happy shall he be
That as thou hast served us hath rewarded thee.
Blessed, who throweth against war's boundary stone
Thy warrior brood, and breaketh bone by bone
Misrule thy son, thy daughter Tyranny.
That landmark shalt thou not remove for shame,
But sitting down there in a widow's weed
Wail; for what fruit is now of thy red fame?
Have thy sons too and daughters learnt indeed
What thing it is to weep, what thing to bleed?
Is it not thou that now art but a name?[1]

[1] "A geographical expression."—Metternich of Italy.

VI

LOCUSTA

Come close and see her and hearken. This is she.
Stop the ways fast against the stench that nips
Your nostril as it nears her. Lo, the lips
That between prayer and prayer find time to be
Poisonous, the hands holding a cup and key,
Key of deep hell, cup whence blood reeks and drips;
The loose lewd limbs, the reeling hingeless hips,
The scurf that is not skin but leprosy.
This haggard harlot grey of face and green
With the old hand's cunning mixes her new priest
The cup she mixed her Nero, stirred and spiced.
She lisps of Mary and Jesus Nazarene
With a tongue tuned, and head that bends to the east,
Praying. There are who say she is bride of Christ.

VII

CELÆNO

The blind king hides his weeping eyeless head,
Sick with the helpless hate and shame and awe,
Till food have choked the glutted hell-bird's craw
And the foul cropful creature lie as dead
And soil itself with sleep and too much bread :
So the man's life serves under the beast's law,
And things whose spirit lives in mouth and maw
Share shrieking the soul's board and soil her bed,
Till man's blind spirit, their sick slave, resign
Its kingdom to the priests whose souls are swine,
And the scourged serf lie reddening from their rod,
Discrowned, disrobed, dismantled, with lost eyes
Seeking where lurks in what conjectural skies
That triple-headed hound of hell their God.

VIII

A CHOICE

Faith is the spirit that makes man's body and blood
  Sacred, to crown when life and death have ceased
  His heavenward head for high fame's holy feast ;
But as one swordstroke swift as wizard's rod
Made Cæsar carrion and made Brutus God,
  Faith false or true, born patriot or born priest,
  Smites into semblance or of man or beast
The soul that feeds on clean or unclean food.
Lo here the faith that lives on its own light,
  Visible music ; and lo there, the foul
  Shape without shape, the harpy throat and howl.
Sword of the spirit of man ! arise and smite,
  And sheer through throat and claw and maw and
    tongue
  Kill the beast faith that lives on its own dung.

IX

THE AUGURS

Lay the corpse out on the altar ; bid the elect
  Slaves clear the ways of service spiritual,
  Sweep clean the stalled soul's serviceable stall,
Ere the chief priest's dismantling hands detect
The ulcerous flesh of faith all scaled and specked
  Beneath the bandages that hid it all,
  And with sharp edgetools œcumenical
The leprous carcases of creeds dissect.
As on the night ere Brutus grew divine
The sick-souled augurs found their ox or swine
  Heartless ; so now too by their after art
In the same Rome, at an uncleaner shrine,
  Limb from rank limb, and putrid part from part,
  They carve the corpse—a beast without a heart.

X

A COUNSEL

O STRONG Republic of the nobler years
Whose white feet shine beside time's fairer flood
That shall flow on the clearer for our blood
Now shed, and the less brackish for our tears ;
When time and truth have put out hopes and fears
With certitude, and love has burst the bud,
If these whose powers then down the wind shall scud
Still live to feel thee smite their eyes and ears,
When thy foot's tread hath crushed their crowns and creeds,
Care thou not then to crush the beast that bleeds,
The snake whose belly cleaveth to the sod,
Nor set thine heel on men as on their deeds ;
But let the worm Napoleon crawl untrod,
Nor grant Mastai the gallows of his God.

1869.

XI

THE MODERATES

Virtutem videant intabescantque relictâ

She stood before her traitors bound and bare,
Clothed with her wounds and with her naked shame
As with a weed of fiery tears and flame,
Their mother-land, their common weal and care,
And they turned from her and denied, and sware
They did not know this woman nor her name.
And they took truce with tyrants and grew tame,
And gathered up cast crowns and creeds to wear,
And rags and shards regilded. Then she took
In her bruised hands their broken pledge, and eyed
These men so late so loud upon her side
With one inevitable and tearless look,
That they might see her face whom they forsook;
And they beheld what they had left, and died.

February 1870.

XII

INTERCESSION

Ave Cæsar Imperator, moriturum te saluto.

I

O Death, a little more, and then the worm ;
A little longer, O Death, a little yet,
Before the grave gape and the grave-worm fret ;
Before the sanguine-spotted hand infirm
Be rottenness, and that foul brain, the germ
Of all ill things and thoughts, be stopped and set ;
A little while, O Death, ere he forget,
A small space more of life, a little term ;
A little longer ere he and thou be met,
Ere in that hand that fed thee to thy mind
The poison-cup of life be overset ;
A little respite of disastrous breath,
Till the soul lift up her lost eyes, and find
Nor God nor help nor hope, but thee, O Death.

II

Shall a man die before his dying day,
Death? and for him though the utter day be nigh,
Not yet, not yet we give him leave to die;
We give him grace not yet that men should say
He is dead, wiped out, perished and past away.
Till the last bitterness of life go by,
Thou shalt not slay him; till those last dregs run dry,
O thou last lord of life! thou shalt not slay.
Let the lips live a little while and lie,
The hand a little, and falter, and fail of strength,
And the soul shudder and sicken at the sky;
Yea, let him live, though God nor man would let
Save for the curse' sake; then at bitter length,
Lord, will we yield him to thee, but not yet.

III

Hath he not deeds to do and days to see
Yet ere the day that is to see him dead?
Beats there no brain yet in the poisonous head,
Throbs there no treason? if no such thing there be,
If no such thought, surely this is not he.
Look to the hands then; are the hands not red?
What are the shadows about this man's bed?
Death, was not this the cupbearer to thee?
Nay, let him live then, till in this life's stead
Even he shall pray for that thou hast to give;
Till seeing his hopes and not his memories fled
Even he shall cry upon thee a bitter cry,
That life is worse than death; then let him live,
Till death seem worse than life; then let him die.

IV

O watcher at the guardless gate of kings,
O doorkeeper that serving at their feast
Hast in thine hand their doomsday drink, and seest
With eyeless sight the soul of unseen things;
Thou in whose ear the dumb time coming sings,
Death, priest and king that makest of king and priest
A name, a dream, a less thing than the least,
Hover awhile above him with closed wings,
Till the coiled soul, an evil snake-shaped beast,
Eat its base bodily lair of flesh away;
If haply, or ever its cursed life have ceased,
Or ever thy cold hands cover his head
From sight of France and freedom and broad day,
He may see these and wither and be dead.

PARIS: *September* 1869.

XIII

THE SAVIOUR OF SOCIETY

I

O son of man, but of what man who knows?
That broughtest healing on thy leathern wings
To priests, and under them didst gather kings,
And madest friends to thee of all man's foes;
Before thine incarnation, the tale goes,
Thy virgin mother, pure of sensual stings,
Communed by night with angels of chaste things,
And, full of grace, untimely felt the throes
Of motherhood upon her, and believed
The obscure annunciation made when late
A raven-feathered raven-throated dove
Croaked salutation to the mother of love
Whose misconception was immaculate,
And when her time was come she misconceived.

II

Thine incarnation was upon this wise,
Saviour ; and out of east and west were led
To thy foul cradle by thy planet red
Shepherds of souls that feed their sheep with lies
Till the utter soul die as the body dies,
And the wise men that ask but to be fed
Though the hot shambles be their board and bed
And sleep on any dunghill shut their eyes,
So they lie warm and fatten in the mire :
And the high priest enthroned yet in thy name,
Judas, baptised thee with men's blood for hire ;
And now thou hangest nailed to thine own shame
In sight of all time, but while heaven has flame
Shalt find no resurrection from hell-fire.

December 1869.

XIV

MENTANA: SECOND ANNIVERSARY

Est-ce qu'il n'est pas temps que la foudre se prouve,
Cieux profonds, en broyant ce chien, fils de la louve?
La Légende des Siècles:—Ratbert.

I

By the dead body of Hope, the spotless lamb
Thou threwest into the high priest's slaughtering-room,
And by the child Despair born red therefrom
As, thank the secret sire picked out to cram
With spurious spawn thy misconceiving dam,
Thou, like a worm from a town's common tomb,
Didst creep from forth the kennel of her womb,
Born to break down with catapult and ram
Man's builded towers of promise, and with breath
And tongue to track and hunt his hopes to death:
O, by that sweet dead body abused and slain,
And by that child mismothered,—dog, by all
Thy curses thou hast cursed mankind withal,
With what curse shall man curse thee back again?

II

By the brute soul that made man's soul its food ;
  By time grown poisonous with it ; by the hate
  And horror of all souls not miscreate ;
By the hour of power that evil hath on good ;
And by the incognizable fatherhood
  Which made a whorish womb the shameful gate
  That opening let out loose to fawn on fate
A hound half-blooded ravening for man's blood ;
(What prayer but this for thee should any say,
  Thou dog of hell, but this that Shakespeare said?)
By night deflowered and desecrated day,
  That fall as one curse on one cursed head,
" Cancel his bond of life, dear God, I pray,
  That I may live to say, The dog is dead ! "

1869.

XV

MENTANA: THIRD ANNIVERSARY

I

Such prayers last year were put up for thy sake;
What shall this year do that hath lived to see
The piteous and unpitied end of thee?
What moan, what cry, what clamour shall it make,
Seeing as a reed breaks all thine empire break,
And all thy great strength as a rotten tree,
Whose branches made broad night from sea to sea,
And the world shuddered when a leaf would shake?
From the unknown deep wherein those prayers were heard,
From the dark height of time there sounds a word,
Crying, Comfort; though death ride on this red hour,
Hope waits with eyes that make the morning dim,
Till liberty, reclothed with love and power,
Shall pass and know not if she tread on him.

II

The hour for which men hungered and had thirst,
And dying were loth to die before it came,
Is it indeed upon thee? and the lame
Late foot of vengeance on thy trace accurst
For years insepulchred and crimes inhearsed,
For days marked red or black with blood or shame,
Hath it outrun thee to tread out thy name?
This scourge, this hour, is this indeed the worst?
O clothed and crowned with curses, canst thou tell?
Have thy dead whispered to thee what they see
Whose eyes are open in the dark on thee
Ere spotted soul and body take farewell
Or what of life beyond the worm's may be
Satiate the immitigable hours in hell?

1870.

XVI

THE DESCENT INTO HELL

January 9th, 1873

I

O NIGHT and death, to whom we grudged him then,
When in man's sight he stood not yet undone,
Your king, your priest, your saviour, and your son,
We grudge not now, who know that not again
Shall this curse come upon the sins of men,
Nor this face look upon the living sun
That shall behold not so abhorred an one
In all the days whereof his eye takes ken.
The bond is cancelled, and the prayer is heard
That seemed so long but weak and wasted breath;
Take him, for he is yours, O night and death.
Hell yawns on him whose life was as a word
Uttered by death in hate of heaven and light,
A curse now dumb upon the lips of night.

II

What shapes are these and shadows without end
That fill the night full as a storm of rain
With myriads of dead men and women slain,
Old with young, child with mother, friend with friend
That on the deep mid wintering air impend,
Pale yet with mortal wrath and human pain,
Who died that this man dead now too might reign,
Toward whom their hands point and their faces bend?
The ruining flood would redden earth and air
If for each soul whose guiltless blood was shed
There fell but one drop on this one man's head
Whose soul to-night stands bodiless and bare,
For whom our hearts give thanks who put up prayer,
That we have lived to say, The dog is dead.

XVII

APOLOGIA

If wrath embitter the sweet mouth of song,
And make the sunlight fire before those eyes
That would drink draughts of peace from the unsoiled skies,
The wrongdoing is not ours, but ours the wrong,
Who hear too loud on earth and see too long
The grief that dies not with the groan that dies,
Till the strong bitterness of pity cries
Within us, that our anger should be strong.
For chill is known by heat and heat by chill,
And the desire that hope makes love to still
By the fear flying beside it or above,
A falcon fledged to follow a fledgeling dove,
And by the fume and flame of hate of ill
The exuberant light and burning bloom of love

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